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十本スライ

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III
すまぎ俊悟

金色の 文字使い

勇者四人に
巻き込まれた
ユニークチート



ファンタジア文庫

KONJIKI NO WORD MASTER

– Golden Word Master –

- Volume 2 -

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「ワイはウィンカア……ワイって呼んで?」

アノルド・オーシャン▶

ヒロ・オカムラ▼

金色の文字使い
勇者四人に
巻き込まれた
ユニークチート

▶ウィンカア・ジオ

Lv.?? HP:??/? MP:??/?

《戦技》一ノ段・疾風

二ノ段・渦巻き...

《称号》天賦の才・動物好き・
大食い...

ヒロたちの前に突然現れた
天然少女。かなりの実力を秘
めた冒険者のようだが……?

ミユア・カストレイア▶

「あ、あまり見ないでほしいよぉ」



PROLOGUE

Under the clear sky, the footsteps of three people could be heard. They walked through a sandy path while making their way up the slope.

This place was called 【Rogi Mountains】 , it was a place that adventurers rarely visited. The reason for this was because there were too many monsters here. The monsters here weren't strong but they attacked in overwhelming numbers.

Skilled adventurers did not gain much experience points from such weak monsters. It was also troublesome, tiring, and time consuming to defeat the monsters one by one.

On the other hand, in addition to the vast number of monsters, the terrain was harsher than it looked so it was possible for beginners to get lost, which was grave.

It wasn't a place that one could enter lightly. Three people were now here, in the mountains that people shy away from, in search of something.

“Hey, it's really in this mountain, right?”

Hiiro Okamura, having climbed for so long and feeling tired, asked one of his travelling companions, Arnold in a distrusting voice.

Arnold who was full of self-confidence replied,

“Yeah, I told you I'll let you eat something exquisite for saving Muir. As a chef, I won't compromise.”

A few days ago, 《Beast Cage》 an organisation made up of people who loathed beastman kidnapped a girl called Muir, — — Arnold's daughter who he cared about more than his life, — — although they weren't connected by blood.

At that time Arnold had commissioned Hiiro to work together with him to save Muir.

Hiiro did not work for free. Requests made to him came with compensation, which he had to approve of. Hiiro worked on the principle of give and take so for him to lend a hand, he had to receive compensation. Therefore taking into consideration that Hiiro

was a gourmet, Arnold decided to pay the fee in the form of exquisite ingredients.

Arnold had to keep his promise and since he was a chef he wanted to let Hiiro eat the most delicious ingredient available in the area.

“Bu-but, Uncle. Slimes and goblins have been coming out in swarms for a while now.” Muir, the girl who was kidnapped, said to Arnold as she continued to walk between him and Hiiro.

Muir had big eyes with sky-blue pupils that snugly fitted on her small face. She had a small cute nose and rosy lips that highlighted her features. She wore a cute thick hat on her head and her glistening silver hair could be seen from below the hat.

Today was a fine, hot day but there was a reason why she wore such a thick hat.

There are four races in this world, 【Edea】 .

『Human Race』 ・ 『Beastman』 ・ 『Demon-kin』 ・ 『Spirit Race』

All the races, except the 『Spirit Race』 , are currently in conflict over which race is more superior. This issue has led to many wars in the past. The tensions between these races are currently high, it wouldn't be strange if war broke out suddenly.

Hiiro and co were currently in the human continent also known as the human world. Of course a lot of people from the 『Human Race』 live here. Although few in numbers, there were also 『Beastman』 living here. However there are many people who do not think well of beastman in the world today.

Arnold and Muir were beastman but they hid their animal ears and tails, which were proof of beastman. Amidst the rising tensions, it would not be good if their status as beastman were discovered.

Arnold had no need to wear a hat, like Muir, to hide his animal ears because they had been torn out by a person from the 『Human Race』 .

Arnold: “Don't worry, Muir! Our aim is just a bit further!”

“That'll be good if it's true.”

Arnold: "Don't say such blunt things, Hihiro!"

The three continued walking. Something caught Muir's attention and she began looking around restlessly. Then Arnold asked,

"What's wrong, Muir?"

Muir: "Eh, ah, don't you smell something strange...?"

Muir was sniffing the air.

Arnold: "Eh? Really?"

Arnold also concentrated on his sense of smell and just like she had said, there was a peculiar smell in the air. Moreover it was quite a pungent smell and without thinking, Arnold knitted his eyebrows together.

"Wh-what is this strong smell...?"

Hihiro also looked around while blocking his nose with his hands. Arnold's eyes gradually glistened and his face loosened. Arnold's face showed that he seemed to have discovered something that had pleased him.

Arnold: "This is... Hey, let's go!"

Muir: "Eh, Uncle?!"

Arnold quickly pulled Muir's hand and ran at full speed. Hihiro lightly sighed when he saw that and dropped his shoulders at the thought of pursuing the smell.

However, since he couldn't just leave, he endured the smell while chasing after them.

Hihiro and co entered an area full of big rocks and memorised the sight in front of them.

Arnold: "Ahaha! I thought so!"

Muir: "Fuwa ~. I see, so it was this smell."

"I see, it was the smell of sulphur."

In front of the three's eyes was a natural hot spring. The steam from the hot spring rose into the air and they could feel the heat radiating from it on their skins.

Hihiro was so impressed by the discovery of a hot spring and the unpleasant smell ceased to bother him... Or rather he completely forgot about it.

All three people were thinking the same thing.

Arnold: "Alright, let's get in!"

Muir: "Okay!"

"Well, it's not bad."

Their faces loosened and they were sweating because of the heat. Fortunately for them, they could freshen up at the hot spring.

Arnold: "Muir, your swimsuit is in this bag, so go change."

"Okay, got it!" Muir said and took the bag from Arnold. Muir looked around and went behind a large rock.

"Alright, we should change... Why are you already taking your clothes off!?"

Hihiro took his clothes off on the spot, without any concern for Arnold. He was also ready to take off his glasses.

"We-well, it's fine. Since Muir's also here, cover up down there." Arnold said as he took a towel out of the bag and threw it at Hihiro.

Hihiro caught the towel before it hit the ground, wrapped it around his waist and approached the hot water. First, he put his right hand into the water to test the temperature.

"... It's a bit hot, but this much should be fine."

The water was about 43-44 °C, which was hotter than an ordinary bath. Hihiro thought that this degree of hotness was fine, so he slowly put his feet in. But as expected it was hot and Hihiro grinded his teeth while putting his whole body in.

“Hah ~...” Hihiro sighed in satisfaction when his whole body was submerged in water. It was his first time at a hot spring but if it felt this good then he would like to visit it many times.

Hihiro looked around a little bit but he didn't see any monsters. The smell of the sulphur must be so intense that it kept them away.

“Oh ~! Muir ~! Why are you so pretty!?”

Hihiro heard Arnold say in a stupid voice. While thinking that it was irritating, Hihiro turned to look in the same direction as Arnold and there was——

Muir: “... Ah... Mhm... D-don't stare at me so much.”

For some reason Muir was wearing a navy blue swimsuit. She was crossing both hands over her chest and she was fidgeting by rubbing her thighs together. She was blushing and her face showed that she was embarrassed.

Arnold: “No, no, this is the best! Truly an angel! Oh ~ my angel ~!”

Arnold, who was breathing heavily through his nose, looked like a pervert rather than an idiot parent. Muir turned her eyes to glimpse at Hihiro.

“Mhm?”

Hihiro noticed her watching him and their eyes met. All of a sudden Muir quickly averted her eyes and then once again glanced at Hihiro.

(What the...?)

Hihiro frowned as he pondered over if she had something to say.

Muir gulped and looked nervous,

“Ah... Mhm... Hi-hihiro-san?”

“What is it?”

Muir: “Er... Ah... Is it weird...?”

It seems like she was trying to ask if there was something wrong with her school swimsuit but she was so worked up about it that Hihiro was at a loss for words.

“It’s not weird, instead it suits you.”

Muir: “Fuh! A-aaaaaahh, mhm, thank you... bery much.”

Although Muir had yet to submerge herself in the water, her head was steaming and she was so red that she looked like an octopus.

(She fumbled over her words... Even so, to be happy about suiting a school swimsuit... That’s cultural difference for you.)

In all the books that Hihiro had read up till now and all the girls that he had met, most children wanted to be treated as adults. They would get angry at being told that they suited a primary school swimsuit rather than be happy.

(Or rather, it’s surprising that there’s school swimsuits in this world...)

Hihiro had stated his impressions indifferently to Muir but,

“Awawawawa! I-it suits me ~! Wh-what should I do?! I can’t face Hihiro-san now ~.”

Muir, who had misunderstood Hihiro’s words as praises, put both hands on her cheeks and spoke in a worried voice so quiet that no one heard it. Arnold who saw this happening, glared at Hiro as if looks could kill.

“Muir is cute! Muir is cute... There’s nothing to be dissatisfied about...”

Arnold added, thinking that Hihiro had praised Muir. Because of Hihiro’s words Muir was unable to ease her mind.

“Hey.”

“What is it, dammit!?”

Arnold was teary even though Hihiro had only called out to him.

“Her school... No, is her swimsuit a popular item here?”

Arnold: “Hah? That? It should be pretty popular. But it’s all in the past, it was made by a summoned hero.”

“... Seriously?”

Arnold: “Yeah. It’s called 《Sukumizu》, we wear it for bathing but apparently it’s for swimming in the ocean.”

However since there were dangerous creatures in the ocean, most people didn’t like swimming there. Therefore the school swimsuits were mainly used for bathing instead of swimming.

(Anyway... What the heck was the past hero doing...?)

After coming to a different world, the past hero should have created something more productive than a swimsuit...

The past hero was certainly someone from Earth, since he had thought up such a thing. Hiiro remembered that he was stuck here, but for now he wanted to enjoy this wonderful paradise.

(Hah ~. It feels so great...)

While he was enjoying the hot springs,

———SPLASH.

Hiiro thought that a peddle had fallen from on top of the rock and turned to look at it. When Hiiro looked to the top of the rock he saw someone standing there and focused his eyes to see who it was.

(... Who is it?)

Hiiro couldn’t confirm the person’s face clearly since the sun was glaring in his eyes and he didn’t have his glasses on. He stared motionlessly at the person while feeling like he was looking at something very far away.

WHOOSH———SPLASH!

The person on the rock suddenly fell face down into the hot water.

“Wh-what the?!”

Arnold was surprised at something suddenly falling into the hot water. Muir opened her eyes wide in fright and stiffened.

Then the person floated up in the water, it looked like a child.

“... Who?” Arnold murmured as he looked at the child who was holding a big spear in her hand.

CHAPTER 1

THE MYSTERIOUS GIRL

[Muir]

The three, who saw the child fall into the hot water had no idea what was going on.

Arnold: "H-hey, is it alright to leave her like that?"

Arnold twitched his eyebrow and looked at the unmoving child, whose face was submerged in water. He was worried since the child would drown if left like that. Arnold turned to look at Hihiro as if he was waiting for a response.

"Aaah ~."

Hihiro looked very satisfied soaking in the hot water as if there was nothing wrong.

Arnold: "Wooah! Why are you being so normal!?"

Of course Arnold would raise his voice; seeing Hihiro ignore the current situation and continue at his own pace, frustrated him.

Arnold: "Hey, Hihiro!"

"You're noisy. You can decide what to do right, Old Man? I want to enjoy the hot springs."

Arnold: "Th-this Brat... Seriously..."

Arnold's face twitched and he dropped his shoulders while muttering, "Same as ever". Then he turned back to the child.

Arnold: "There's no choice, I can't just leave her like this. Muir, help me out."

Muir: "Ah, yes!"

"First of all, that spear's in the way. Ooh, it's quite heavy. Muir, hold on to this for a bit."

Arnold said as he took the spear from the child and passed it to Muir.

Arnold: "It's heavy so be careful."

Muir: "Yes!"

Even though she was small, Muir was a beastman so she was quite strong. If she only had to hold onto the spear, then it was nothing. Nevertheless when the spear was passed to her, she thought it was quite heavy. Muir held onto the spear firmly as not to drop it. She was surprised that such a small child could use such a heavy spear.

Muir had yet to see the child's face but guessed that it was a girl, judging from the long hair, garments, and stature similar to hers.

Arnold used both hands to pull the child out of the hot water and laid them face up on the ground. They were finally able to see the child's face.

Arnold: "Ah, as I thought it's a girl."

The girl looked to be around the same age as Muir, she was a cute girl with blonde waist length hair that was french braided at the back. Muir thought that the bundle of hair swaying on top of the girl's head was cute. She looked over the girl's whole body and unintentionally gulped. She was jealous of the girl's body and stared intensely at it.

A large chest, thin arms and legs, a thin waist, and fine skin. She had a well-featured face, enough to be called a beautiful girl. The girl had features that Muir wanted.

Muir looked at the figure that was evidently different from hers and was sad. Muir thought that the girl's figure was unfair, especially her chest area... Even though they looked to be around the same age.

"Ooh, it's a girl."

Muir turned around when she heard the voice and there stood Hiiro but,

Muir: "Ky-kyah!"

Hiiro only had a towel wrapped on his waist. Muir's face reddened at seeing his

exposed top half and she quickly turned away.

(T-too close ~!)

Hihiro was unaware of Muir's embarrassment and glanced at the sleeping girl, then he walked towards the rocky area where his clothes were. He seemed to have enjoyed the hot springs enough.

Arnold sensed Muir's embarrassment and in order to comfort her, he said,

"Le-let's change our clothes for now."

Muir: "Yes..."

Muir checked to see if the girl was still alive and she seemed to be breathing properly, so Muir left her to sleep on the spot and went to change.

The girl was still sleeping when the three returned. Hihiro blankly looked down at the girl and enquired,

"What do you plan to do?"

Arnold: "Well ~, we can't just leave her like this, the monsters might come..."

Muir: "Th-that's right. We have to wake her up."

Muir once again observed the girl. She was wearing light equipment, her breastplate looked as if it would burst and her belly was exposed. The girl had a black choker wrapped around her neck. She was wearing shorts covered by a fluttering cloth. Also if she was had such a big spear, it was highly probable that she was an adventurer.

The girl might have potential but if they left her like this, without waking her, and something were to happen, they would feel bad about it. Arnold was currently slapping the girl's cheeks.

Muir looked to Hihiro, who was standing next to her and said,

"I-is it alright?"

"Who knows? It doesn't seem like she has any external wounds. So she shouldn't be

dead..."

Muir: "But is she an adventurer...? She's carrying such a big spear."

When Muir turned her gaze back to the girl, an uncomfortable feeling overcame her when she saw how Arnold was trying to wake up the girl. Earlier Arnold had been slapping the girl's cheeks with the palm of his hands but for some reason he was now poking her cheeks with his finger as if he was enjoying the feeling of her cheeks. Most of all Arnold's face had relaxed and he looked like he was enjoying himself.

Muir: "Un-uncle...?"

Arnold: "Eh! Ah, i-it's nothing! It wasn't because her cheeks were soft or anything... Ah."

Muir: "Uncle..."

For some reason Muir became sad upon seeing Arnold's unnatural behaviour. As for Hihiro,

"What do we have here? A crime scene?"

Arnold: "You're wrong! We-well I unintentionally... Argh enough! Believe me, Muir!"

Muir: "Y-yes... I believe in you... Yes, I believe...?"

Arnold: "Wh-wh-which is it, dammit?!"

Muir was desperately trying to read the situation and got depressed. Arnold had ran away somewhere.

Muir: "Un-uncle?!"

"Just leave him alone, he'll be back. More importantly, I don't mind leaving her like that."

Muir: "Y-you can't leave her like that!"

"Eh... Then how am I supposed to wake her up...?"

Muir was feeling perplexed and then she heard Hiiro sigh.

Hiiro looked like he wanted to go and find the exquisite ingredients as fast as possible. He was troubled since they couldn't find the ingredients by doing nothing. Only Arnold knew about the ingredients and he chose not to leave her. That meant that Hiiro also had to wait here until she woke up.

"... It can't be helped."

Hiiro walked close to the sleeping girl and then put his fingertip towards her face.

"Hi-hihiro-san?" Not knowing what was going on, Muir enquired.

"Its fine, so just shut up and watch. I'll wake her up."



[Hiiro]

Hiiro Okamura was not a person of this world, 【Edea】. He was Japanese. One day his four classmates were in the classroom when he returned from the rooftop.

At that time a magical circle like the ones seen in games appeared at their feet. Everything in front of his eyes turned white and the next thing he noticed was a scene that he'd never seen before.

Hiiro was summoned to this world, 【Edea】 but it wasn't just a normal summoning.

The King of the 『Human Race』 had summoned heroes to rescue them from the threat of the 『Demon-kin』 and 『Beastman』.

But according to old documents, only four heroes were supposed to be summoned.

In this world if you recite 《Status》 a game like 《Status》 screen will appear and on that, there is a column called 《Title》.

The four people who were summoned together with Hiiro, had 《Hero》 written in their title column. But Hiiro had the laughable title of 《Innocent Bystander》. He was

an ordinary person who was dragged into this world with the heroes.

Hiiro didn't like being used and it was a joke for him to work for a country that had selfishly summoned him. That was why unlike the other four heroes, Hiiro decided to live in this world by himself.

There was magic in this world and the eight basic attributes were: Fire • Water • Earth • Wind • Lightning • Ice • Light and Dark.

Without exception unattributed magic users were called unique magician. Personal magic, special magic, rare magic. There were various descriptions for unattributed magic but in short, it was a magic that could only be handled by a single person; generally called unique magic.

《Word Magic》 ... That was the name of Hiiro's rare magic. By concentrating magic power into his fingertip and writing a character, he could evoke the effect of the character he'd written. That was Hiiro's magic.

For example; if he wrote 『Flame炎』, flames would burst forth from nothing; if he wrote 『Float浮』, the thing he wrote it on would float into the air; if he wrote 『Burst爆』, a terrible explosion would occur. It was truly an almighty cheat ability. Of course, he didn't have to just write kanji but he used kanji because the meaning was clearer and it was easier to manifest the effect he wanted.

Thus he thought about writing 『Wake起』 on the sleeping girl and pointed his fingertip towards her but ——— in that instant, something unexpected happened.

CHOMP!

“... Hah?”

Hiiro was surprised at what had happened. Muir was also surprised and stiffened on the spot with her mouth gaping open. The reason why the two were acting like that was because the girl who was supposed to be asleep had bitten Hiiro's finger, no, his entire hand.

MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH

Even more surprisingly, the girl was moving her mouth while still unconscious.

“Ou-ouch, ouch?! Let go, Antenna Girl!”

Hiiro had apparently decided to call the girl, Antenna Girl. It was obvious that he had attached this nickname because of her hairstyle.

Hiiro heard his hand make a crunching sound and while bearing with the pain, he desperately tried to free his hand from the girl’s mouth. But he was unsuccessful and only managed to drag her face along with his hand.

“You don’t intend to let go even while unconscious?! Hey, let go! Or rather, wake up, Idiot!”

As if responding to Hiiro’s voice, the girl’s eyebrow twitched and she slowly opened her eyes. When Hiiro saw that she was finally waking up he felt relieved.

Girl: “... Good morning...”

“... Who said that you could greet me like that?”

Hiiro said as his face twitched.

“First of all, let my hand go.”



“...?”

The girl glugged and tilted her head.

“Whatever, open your mouth!”

Girl: “...? Ah ~.”

While wearing an emotionless expression the girl opened her mouth and Hiiro freed his hand. The girl’s teeth marks remained clearly on the back of his hand.

“U-umm Hiiro-san? Are you okay?”

Muir finally spoke up. However Hiiro didn’t answer her and rubbed his hand.

Girl: “Who’s Hiiro...?”

“And what about you? Trying to eat someone’s hand.”

Hiiro said in full displeasure but the girl blinked her eyes while looking up and down while remaining expressionless.

Girl: “... Because it smelt good...?”

“Why are you asking? And my hand is not food.”

Girl: “I’m sorry... Hiiro?”

“Don’t call people’s names so familiarly, Antenna Girl.”

Girl: “... No.”

“Hah?”

Wi: “Wi is called Wi.”

“... Hah?”

Hiiro had replied without thinking. He didn’t understand what the girl was going on about.

“A-ah, could it be that your name is Wi-san...?”

Muir asked but the girl shook her head in reply.

“No... Wi is Wi. But that’s not all...”

“... What’re you going on about?”

Muir: “Co-come now...”

The girl brought about a mysterious atmosphere. Whether she was a my-pace kind of person or if it was natural but she didn’t seem to have a grasp of things.

Muir: “Are you trying to say that Wi-san is not Wi-san?”

“Wi is Wi, you know? But Wi is also called Winka.”

Muir: “... Ah, so your name is Winka-san! And Wi-san is your nickname, right?”

“That’s right. That’s why you can call me Wi. Who are you...?”

Winka noticed Muir’s presence for the first time and looked at her while tilting her head.

Muir: “Ah, I’m sorry! I, I am Muir! Muir Castliar!”

Wi: “Muir... Hihiro.”

“Like I said, don’t call my name so familiarly, Antenna Girl.”

Hihiro was still holding onto his hand, it seemed to be incredibly sore.

Wi: “I’m sorry... For biting your hand.”

“You didn’t bite it, you tried to eat it.”

Winka looked down, upset at Hihiro’s words. Muir who saw that said,

“U-um Hihiro-san? Wi-san looks like she’s reflecting upon her actions...”

Muir looked up at Hihiro, troubled.

“... Hah, anyway how far did the Old Man go?”

Hihiro thought about entrusting this unknown person to Arnold. At that moment as if it was timed, violent thumping sounds headed towards them. Arnold had just returned and was breathing intensely while looking at Hihiro and co. After he had confirmed that the girl they'd saved earlier was awake, he laughed and said, “Hahahahaha... Oh! You're awake, young lady!”

Muir: “Ah, Uncle! That's right, her name's Wi-san. Ah, but it's actually Winka.”

Wi: “... Wi is fine.”

Arnold: “Eh ~ Wi, is it? Nice to meet you, Wi! I'm Arnold Ocean!”

Wi: “Yup... Nice to meet you.”

Arnold: “But why did you fall down?”

Wi: “Fall down... What do you mean?”

It seems that Wi didn't remember falling down into the hot water.

STOMACH RUMBLING...

Everyone heard what sounded like the painful cries of a small beastman. Winka flopped to the ground.

“H-hey, what's wrong, Wi?”

Arnold shouted but Winka pressed on her stomach and said, “I'm hungry...”

Hihiro and co dropped their shoulders.



[Muir]

Winka had come to this mountain for a purpose but the bag containing her provisions had dropped somewhere. While she was loitering about on an empty stomach, she

smelt an intense smell.

It was the smell of the hot spring but Winka had thought that it was the smell of some kind of food and frantically pursed the smell.

However when she reached her destination, she only saw water. She felt hopeless and exhausted and just like Hihiro and co had seen, she had fallen from the rock.

“Nom mrrmm mrrhmm on nom...”

Right now she was gulping down the food Arnold had obtained as preserved food without care. Even so,

Arnold: “... I-it’s somewhat cute... Right?”

“Y-yeah.”

Winka’s eating figure overlapped with the figure of a small animal desperately eating feed. Muir and Arnold watched her eating calmly, her figure gave off a soothing effect.

The other person, Hihiro was eating the dried meat which was part of the preserved food just like Winka. Seeing her eat as if the food was really delicious, Hihiro also wanted to eat it.

Arnold: “This guy... Eating so shamelessly... It’s entirely opposite.”

Muir: “I-is that so...?”

Muir also thought the same but restrained herself from saying anything rude.

A short while after all of Winka’s food had disappeared and she stared at Arnold greedily.

Arnold: “Er... I don’t have anymore...”

STARE...

Arnold: “No... Like I said...”

STARE...

Arnold: "... Muir, help me out!"

Muir: "Eeh! I, I don't have anything! Hiiro-san!"

Everyone focused on the dried meat that was still in Hiiro's hands.

"... Hhm?"

Hiiro noticed their gazes and tensed. Especially Winka, who's gaze was more intense than anyone.

"I won't give it to you."

Hiiro said and Winka slowly approached him. Without caring about the approaching Winka, Hiiro chewed on the dried meat but Winka was looking at the meat as if she was trying to put a hole through it and it was very uncomfortable.

"Hey Antenna Girl, go over there."

Wi: "... Here."

"I get distracted when you're looking at me. So go over there."

Winka shook her head in refusal. Hiiro looked at her annoyingly and could feel that she was determined not to move. So he gave up, shrugged his shoulders and presented the meat that he was chewing on to Winka.

Wi: "... It's okay?"

"Yeah..."

Hiiro's appetite had sorrowfully disappeared. After Winka looked at Hiiro's hands, she opened her mouth and ate the dried meat. Arnold had his eyes wide open in surprise at seeing how obediently Hiiro was giving away his food.

"Ah...!?"

Muir said quietly but Arnold had heard it and titled his head.

Arnold: "Wh-what's wrong?"

Muir: “Eh? No-nothing! It’s nothing!”

Muir abruptly shook her head in denial. But an unsatisfied feeling awoke within her.

(Th-the meat that Hiiro was chewing on... I-i-in-ind-indirect kiss... Aouh...)

Muir had not raised a voice in surprise at Hiiro giving his meat to Winka, like Arnold had, she was surprised that Hiiro and Winka had an indirect kiss. Hiiro and Winka did not notice her behaviour at all. Muir’s heart was pricking in pain.

Without thinking Muir stared at Hiiro’s mouth and her face flushed. Muir hit her cheeks with both her hands not noticing that her face was flushed. But she still continued to flicker her eyes towards Hiiro’s mouth and watched it as it moved. She felt her heart throbbing.



[Hiiro]

As a matter of fact, it was unlike Hiiro to hand over his food so easily but there were some reasons for why he did.

First, if he was full then he wouldn’t be able to able to eat delicious food cooked from the exquisite ingredients they were going to obtain.

Second, the dried meat wasn’t tasty.

Third, Winka didn’t seem like a malicious person, it felt unkind to treat her, who was like a pure child, like this.

It wasn’t pleasant to be stared at and it wasn’t a difficult choice to make when Hiiro knew that he would be released from the stare.

Winka stared at Hiiro after she finished eating.

Wi: “It was tasty. Thanks, Hiiro.”

“That’s good.”

When she saw Hihiro standing up, Winka tilted her head and asked,

“... Where are you going?”

“It has nothing to do with you, right?”

It was a typical thing for Hihiro to say but,

Wi: “Tell me?”

Wi resembled Hihiro and was also stubborn. Hihiro shot a look to Arnold as if telling him to do something about this situation but it was Muir who answered,

“Ah, well ~... We are going further ahead, but Wi-san travels alone, right?”

Wi: “Yeah... I’m looking for someone. I came here because I heard rumours that he was here.”

Muir: “A person? It is alright if I ask you, who you are looking for?”

Winka immediately stood up, raised her spear and showed it to everyone. The spear should have been quite heavy but this little girl was able to lift it up with one hand. So it was strange.

Wi: “The person who made this.”

Muir: “If you look at it closely, it certainly is a splendid spear.”

The length of the spear looked about 180 cm.

There were red and black spots on the handle and the blade was wrapped in a cloth so it was hard to see the shape but the spear itself looked as if it was forged by an incredible person.

At the base of the spear there was a chain about 20 cm long with what appeared to be a weight on it.

Wi: “It’s called 《Bone Maiden of Victory》.”

Muir: “Bone Maiden of Victory... Isn’t that a strange name for a spear?”

Wi: "... Really?"

Muir: "But isn't it difficult to carry around such a long spear? It's also pretty heavy."

"Wi is strong, so it's okay. Also... It gets smaller."

Wi said as she pulled on the chain at the base of the spear. The handle clinked and shortened, however, the chain also accordingly became longer.

It seemed that the inside had become hollow and was made up of three parts. Finally the handle was about 50 cm.

"Wow ~."

Muir said in amazement.

They heard, however, that the weight of the spear didn't change. The chains rattled and when it was being carried the chains had to be wrapped around the handle so it was heavy.

Muir: "What kind of person made that spear?"

Muir had become interested in the person who had made such a special spear.

Winka placed the spear down on the ground and spread her hands out before putting them on her head.

BOING BOING... BOING BOING...

Wi: "He looked like this."

The three froze. Nevertheless Winka flopped her hands on top of her head again.

Muir: "I-is that person... a beastman...?"

Wi: "Yeah... This kind of person."

Apparently the person she was looking for was a beastman but it was strange that she couldn't explain it in words so everyone tilted their heads. It seemed that the three couldn't understand Wi's world.

Muir: “In other words, Wi-san, the person you are looking for is the man who made that spear, who is also a beastman?”

Wi: “Yeah... That’s it.”

Arnold and Muir, however, looked grim. Muir began to panic so instead Arnold said with a serious look,

“Why are you looking for him?”

Since Arnold didn’t know what her intentions were for finding the beastman, he asked her. Perhaps she might even be someone that wanted to do something bad to the beastman. Search and kill. Arnold had met many people who had done such things. Hihiro also recognised the existence of such people. But Winka remained expressionless and her words left Arnold dumbfounded.

“Because he’s... My pops.”

“... Huh?”

Hihiro who was also listening to the story didn’t expect that kind of answer but unlike Arnold, he remained quiet. Hihiro opened his eyes wide and stared at Winka.

(Pops? That’s means her father... Right? So that means the person she’s looking for is her father and her father is a beastman? So that means this Antenna Girl is also a beastman? But she doesn’t have animal ears... No, there’s a high probability that they’re not connected by blood.)

Hihiro met a father and child like that recently. A few days ago when Muir had been kidnapped by 《Beast Cage》, a beastman mother and daughter were also caught.

Hihiro managed to save them and that was when the girl’s father appeared. He was from the 『Human Race』 and fell in love at first sight after being saved by the mother and daughter.

Therefore they had gotten married and become a family. The daughter was not connected to the man by blood. Hihiro had remembered this and thought that Winka was also the same. Arnold also thought the same and questioned her.

“Hey Wi, is your dad related to you by blood?”

Wi: “...? Why are you asking something like that?”

Wi had a blank expression on her face. It was certainly a strange question for Winka.

Arnold: “Ah, my bad. I was just curious.”

Wi: “... It’s fine. We’re connected by blood...? Since Wi is ma and pop’s child.”

The impact of those words were amazing. Hihiro and Arnold were both thinking that Wi was the daughter brought into the marriage from the mother’s side. But when they heard she wasn’t, they thought there was something strange about it. The lack of animal ears and tail perplexed them.

“You don’t look like a beastman.”

All caution was blown away at Hihiro’s careless remark. Arnold looked at him with a look that said, “What’re you going to do if she has a dark past?”

“Yeah... Because Wi looks like her mum.”

Wi easily answered. Arnold seemed like he was dodging the answer, put his hands to his chin and asked Winka,

“Wi, are you half-bred...?”

Wi: “Ham... What’s that? Is it tasty?”

Wi had heard the word ham and thought it was food. Her eyes were somewhat sparkling. What a misunderstanding...

Arnold: “N-no... It seems that I worded the question wrong. Let’s see, Wi is your mother a human?”

“Yup.”

Wi easily answered.

(I see. A human and beastman half-breed.)

Hihiro nodded as if he was agreeing with himself.

Arnold: “So it’s like that. In short, you’re the type of half with beastman blood but your human blood is stronger, right Wi?”

Wi: “...?”

Arnold had said that for confirmation but Winka didn’t understand what he meant and tilted her head.

“Hey, Old Man, does the half-breed’s appearance only lean a certain way?”

Arnold firmly answered Hihiro’s question.

A half-breed is exactly that, a half-breed. In other words the parents were from different races.

In Winka’s case, her mother was from the human race while her father was a beastman. The appearance of the child born inclined to one race. Like Winka, there were children who looked like humans but there were also humans who looked like beastman.

When a child takes after the beastman, unlike Arnold and Muir who looked human with attached animal ears and tail, there were a lot of cases where their body hair and features will become close to that of an animal.

For example if they were a wolf, they wouldn’t have just animal tail and ears but their whole body would be like that of a wolf, a werewolf.

The existence of half-breeds in 【Edea】 was taboo. The reason for this was that half-breeds couldn’t use magic like the 『Human Race』 or 『Demon-kin』 . They also couldn’t use 《Trick Art》 devised by 『Beastman』 .

“Trick Art?”

Arnold: “Ah? You don’t know, Hihiro? Beastman can’t use magic. So, in exchange for vigour they can use something called 《Trick Art》 .”

Hearing that Hihiro recalled the time he’d confirmed Arnold’s 《Status》 , the magic

column was changed to 《Trick Art》. Hihiro was certain that it was another name for magic but it seems that it's an Art that could only be used by beastman.

Arnold: "Beastman half-breeds can't use 《Trick Art》 like regular beastman. In other words, half-breeds can't use magic or Trick Art that normal humans or beastman could. That's why they're treated as a heretical existence and are taboo."

"I see. So this Antenna Girl can't use magic and even if she has beastman blood she can't use 《Trick Art》 either."

Arnold: "That's right."

Hihiro looked at Winka again, he had thought that her attitude would change because of the current conversation but she looked indifferent to it.

Arnold: "But, I'd never thought that I would meet someone with beastman blood here, right Muir?"

Muir: "Y-yes. It's a surprise."

Muir also knew that Winka was someone who had beastman blood so she won't hurt other beastman. The frightening feeling she felt before had now disappeared.

Winka looked around at the three's expressions. Arnold felt that her actions were unnatural.

"What's wrong?"

"...You're not scared...?"

Winka asked, her eyes a little lonely.

Arnold: "Hah? Of what?"

Wi: "When I talk to other people about my beastman blood, they get scared of me... They call me taboo and a monster."

A shadow was casted upon Winka's expression. It was an expression that showed just what kind of treatment she had received until now. Even if they talked about it now,

she might immediately decide to leave. She seemed to be used to it since she didn't hold back while talking about it. It was sad to see that she had grown accustomed to it. Then Arnold patted her, put his hands on her shoulder and while grinning showed her his butt.

Arnold: "Look."

Wi: "...?!"

In that moment her eyes widened because a tail had suddenly popped out from Arnold's butt. To be more exact it popped out from between the gaps of his pants.

Wi: "...Beastman?"

Arnold: "That's right. Muir and I are both beastmans."

Muir: "Y-yes!"

Arnold: "So we're not scared of you at all. Besides, what's taboo? It just means that you can't use magic or 《Trick Art》, right? Moreover, you don't look like a monster."

Muir: "Y-yah! Wi-san isn't a taboo or a monster!"

Wi felt comfortable and her heart warmed upon hearing the two's desperate words. A relieved expression was seen on her face and she glanced at Hiiro.

"Mhm? What is it?"

Winka was staring at Hiiro as if she was waiting for him to say something. But she couldn't tell what he was thinking because he had a mysterious expression on his face.

"A-ah, this guy's the same as well... Or rather, he's more frank than us."

Arnold spoke for Hiiro since he decided that Hiiro didn't feel like answering.

Arnold: "What do you think he said when he found out we were beastman?"

"Oi."

"Do you wanna hear it?"

“Oi.”

“You wanna hear it, right?”

“Oi.”

Hiiro interrupted Arnold many times but was completely ignored. It certainly wasn't something to be troubled over.

Wi: “Yeah, I want to hear it.”

A sense of embarrassment passed through Hiiro as he saw Winka's eyes sparkle in anticipation.

Arnold told Winka about the time he'd met Hiiro. Especially the part when Hiiro said, “Instead of caring about every little thing, it's more productive to do other things, like reading books”, Arnold couldn't stop laughing while saying that. Winka glanced at Hiiro many times with a look of respect.

“Hah, who cares about such a story? More importantly, how long are we going to stand here for?”

Hiiro wanted to quickly free himself from the topic and act in order to satisfy his stomach. Winka heard Hiiro's words and looked around at the three.

Wi: “Hiiro and co, what are you going to do now?”

She seemed interested in their actions.

“We intend to go to the summit. There seems to be delicious ingredients there.”

Muir answered and the antenna on top of Winka's head sprung up. It was quivering around as if it received something. It was as if it was an animal's tail.

Wi: “... Food?”

Arnold was the one who answered that question. “Oh yeah. There's a spring at the summit, it was made when rain water accumulated for many years. But we're here to hunt the Cow Crabs that inhabit the spring.”

Wi: “Cow crab... Is it tasty?”

Arnold: “It’s superb! It has a huge body like a cow. When you eat a mouthful, the subtle and rich crab flavour spreads all throughout your mouth! The shell can be used to make good soup stock... Drool, Oi!”

Drool flowed out of Winka’s mouth like a waterfall.

Wi: “I want to eat it...”

Arnold: “Eh? A-ah really? Well if you hunt the Cow Crab, I don’t mind preparing Wi’s portion as well...”

Winka held her spear and pointed straight at the summit.

Wi: “... Let’s go!”

Her eyes showed no hesitation, instead they shone with a look of genuine appetite for food. Moreover ———

“Oi, what’re you doing, let’s go, Pervert.”

By the time Arnold had noticed, Hihiro was already walking towards the summit.

Arnold: “Hey, don’t call me a pervert! Your change in attitude is honestly, argh!”

Wi: “Arnold is a pervert...?”

Arnold: “See! Now Wi’s got the wrong idea!”

“Calm down, Uncle!”

A panicked Muir tried to calm down Arnold. Then Hihiro delivered the final blow,

“Whatever let’s go, Lolicon.”

Arnold: “What?!”

Wi: “... Do you like little girls?”

Arnold: “Argh, stop it alreeeeeadyy!”

Arnold’s heart squeezed upon seeing Winka’s naïve eyes. Muir merely breathed, shocked at the sight in front of her.

There was a large spring at the summit just like Arnold had said. The summit was shaped exactly like a volcano crater and there was a big dent at the centre. That was where the rainwater had gathered and turned into a spring.

There were many rocks and stones scattered around and more trees and grass grew than Hihiro had expected. The area was naturally rich in nature. When Hihiro looked around the spring, he felt his spirits clear up. The spring was so transparent that he could see the bottom. Many fish and creatures that looked like crustaceans lived in the spring.

The size of the spring, which looked like a circle was roughly measured by Hihiro’s eyes. It was surely around 100 m in radius. It was a rather large pool of water.

“How do you catch the Cow Crab, Old Man?”

Hihiro couldn’t see anything that looked like a monster, so he thought that it was either at the bottom of the spring or more in the centre. He was concerned about how to catch it so he asked Arnold.

Arnold: Mhm ~ actually, Cow Crabs are very timid creatures. They rarely emerge and break the surface of the water.”

“Hah? Then what do we do? Don’t tell me we have to dive in to catch it.”

If that’s the case, then Arnold should go and catch it. But Arnold shook his head.

Arnold: “Cow Crabs are good at camouflaging. I’m not even a professional fisherman, it’s doubtful that I could catch them.”

“Then what are we going to do?”

Arnold: “That’s where you come in, Hihiro...!”

“... Hah?”

Hihiro was taken aback when Arnold suddenly pointed his finger at him.

Arnold: "Use your 《Word Magic》 to find and catch them! I know you can do this much, right? How's my brilliant plan? Ahahahahaha!"

Hihiro stared at Arnold and a vein popped up on his forehead.

Arnold: "Ahaha... Eh? Oi, oi, what's wrong? Why are you coming up behind me, huh?"

Hihiro kicked Arnold's back with all his might.

Arnold: "Ouwaaah?!"

SPLLAAAAAASH!

The water made a magnificent sound as Arnold dived face first into the spring.

Muir: "Un-uncle?!"

Arnold lifted his face from the water and coughed violently, he had swallowed quite a bit of water.

"Argh, uogh, argh!? Wh-what are you doing, Hihiro!?"

Arnold hurled to Hihiro with a cold gaze.

"This was certainly my request fee, was it not, Old Man?"

Arnold: "Eh... Ah, that's right but..."

Arnold understood what Hihiro was trying to say and was embarrassed.

"And yet, I'm the one who has to catch the prey? I'm the only one who has to work? Do you think that's compensation?"

Arnold could see a black aura coming out from behind Hihiro.

Wi: "Hihiro... Scary."

Muir: "Awahwawwah!"

Winka and Muir distanced themselves when they saw Hiiro's appearance.

"W-well, it'll be faster that way and it's more reliable. You can catch it in the blink of an eye with your magic, right?"

Certainly Hiiro was able to easily catch the prey with his 《Word Magic》 just like Arnold had said. Hiiro still hadn't told them everything about his magic but Arnold had concluded correctly from watching Hiiro use it.

It was inevitable since Hiiro also wanted to eat delicious things but he didn't like Arnold's attitude. So he thought it was natural to punish Arnold a bit and sent him flying into the spring.

"Whatever, just hurry up and bring them here."

Arnold: "Well, like I said earlier, I can't see through their camouflage..."

"Manage with your fighting spirit."

Arnold: "Th-that's absurd..."

"Or else what? Do you intent to eat something that I caught with my magic, alone? I'll say it again, this is my request fee, right?"

"Guh... Argh... Fine! I get it! I'll catch a lot of them so wait!"

Arnold shouted in a partially frustrated voice and then he swam to the centre of the spring.

Muir: "D-do your best! Uncle ~!"

Wi: "You can do it ~."

Arnold was sent off with encouragements from Muir and Wi.

Hiiro had free time so he decided to check his 《Status》. On the way here he had fought against many monsters and used magic so he thought it was better to confirm his current physical strength and magic power.

Hiiro Okamura Lv 30
HP: 387/545 MP: 770/1200 EXP: 20089 NEXT: 3980
ATK: 198 (259) DEF: 150 (165) AGI: 280 (282) HIT: 149 (157) INT: 249 (253)
《 Magic Attribute》 None 《Magic》 Word Magic (Single Chain Release • Air Writing Release • Parallel Chain Writing) 《 Titles》 Innocent Bystander • Otherworlder • Word Master • Awakened One • Ripper • The Imaginator • Monster Killer • Gourmet Bastard • Go My Own Way

His titles also increased slightly and he found a word that he was bothered by. That word was 《Parallel Chain Writing》 .(Well, with this amount I can even beat a Cow Crab... Mhm?)

(A new ability...?)

Hiiro clicked it with his fingers to see the explanation.

《Parallel Chain Writing》 MP Cost: 50

More than one character can be written. Originally when a character with a continuous effect is activated, another new character could not be written until the effect ran out. However it is now possible to write another character without waiting for the effects of the previous one to expire. Furthermore it is now possible

to write the same letter consecutively and depending on the character various synergistic effects may occur. However once activated, it is impossible to freely cancel the effects of characters.

(I see. In other words, after I wrote and activated a character it was impossible for me to write a new character without waiting a minute but now I can consecutively write characters without waiting.)

This was a convenient release ability. It was necessary for him to try various experiments with this. This release ability was more pleasant than he'd thought so it was only natural that he smiled.



[Muir]

“Uncle... Are you okay?”

Muir worried about Arnold, who had disappeared into the spring and turned her eyes towards the centre of it.

“Well, even beginners can defeat the monsters here, so if it's the Old Man, he should be fine.”

Muir: “Y-yes...”

Muir's was still uncertain so her uneasy expression didn't change. Then in Muir's eyes reflected Winka's motionless gaze. Muir, who thought that it wasn't unreasonable to be worried, turned to see what Winka was doing.

“What are you doing, Wi-san?”

Muir asked and Winka pointed at the ground. There ——

“Hya!”

were insects walking in a zigzag. Its appearance was a caterpillar. When Muir saw that, chills ran down her back and she raised her voice.

Muir: “W-w-w-why are you looking at bugs, Wi-san?!”

Wi: “Mhm... Their movement is interesting.”

Muir: “I... Is that so...?”

After realizing Winka had been staring at insects for a while, Muir concluded that she was someone with a unique presence.

(Wh-what a mysterious person...)

As Muir thought that, the antenna on Winka’s head picked up something and started quivering then Winka, herself, lifted her face from the ground and looked at the spring. Of course Muir noticed her appearance and asked her what was wrong then Winka slowly pointed her finger at the spring.

Wi: “... It’s coming.”

Muir: “Eh? It’s coming? What’s coming...?! ”

When Muir looked at where Winka was pointing,

“Woaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

There, was Arnold who was desperately moving his arms and swimming towards Muir. Behind him were —— a countless number of crustaceans.



[Hiiro]

“Hi-hiiiiiiiiiro!”

Hiiro understood the situation by Arnold’s cry.

“Hoh, haven’t you become good bait, Old Man.”

The creatures squirming behind Arnold must be Cow Crabs. Each one was certainly very big. They were as big as a person and covered in black and white spots like a cow.

Hihiro slowly stood up and his face slackened. That was the crab that Arnold had been raving about; when Hihiro had thought about the taste his mouth salivated even more. Arnold had already seen what was behind him and distorted his face. He swam at full force thinking that if he stopped now, he'd become the prey for the crabs.

Muir: "Hi-hihiro-san!"

"Step back, Chibi. It's hunting time."

"... I'll help."

Winka held her spear as she came up next to him.

"Naturally. If you want to eat, then work."

Wi: "Mm..."

Arnold gradually approached.

Arnold: "Puaaaaaah! I, I made itttttttttttt!"

Arnold crawled out of the spring and breathed heavily while staggering towards Hihiro and co.

"Troublesome, Old Man. I want to confirm something, are those Cow Crabs?"

"Haahaahaahaa... Ah... Only... Me..."

Hihiro didn't understand what Arnold was saying. Arnold seemed to be desperately trying to tell him something but he couldn't say it well because of his excessive breathing. Hihiro tried to guess what he was trying to convey and faced him while frowning. However at that time the Cow Crabs were approaching. Surprisingly the cluster of crabs started gathering at the centre.

Hihiro was stunned by what was happening before him. The Cow Crabs that touched the other crabs in the centre had been absorbed and a giant crab was forming.

(What the... did they unite?)

Yes, it was just like a union... It was fusion. The Cow Crabs were fusing together one

by one.

(Oi, what should we do, Old Man?)

Arnold: “Haahaahaahaa... Fuh ~.”

In order to catch his breath, Arnold repeatedly took deep breaths. When his breathing finally settled, he pointed his forefinger at the Cow Crab.

Arnold: “They usually behave alone, but when they get agitated they call the other Cow Crabs to get the prey in front of them! Once agitated the cow crabs will camouflage themselves like that!”

“Camouflage? That’s camouflaging?”

No matter how you looked at it, it only looked like they were fusing together. But Arnold had said that Cow Crabs are good at camouflaging so they overlap their bodies to make it look bigger.

Originally one of the purposes of camouflaging was to scare away their enemies but the Cow Crabs were so agitated that they tried to defeat Hiirou and co by combining their strength.

Arnold: “Well ~, I didn’t know where they were. So I went around rampaging and it turned out like this!”

Arnold probably rampaged a lot. Arnold must have made an explosion in the water to stir this many Cow Crabs.

“I see, well, it doesn’t change the fact that we have to kill them, so it’s fine.”

Wi: “Yeah... Defeat them then eat.”

Winka was also motivated. The Cow Crab transformed into a creature that was larger than a two-story house. The Cow Crabs blew a terrific torrent of water from its mouth like a laser. Moreover, there were several beams of water coming Hiirou and co’s way.

“Muir!”

Arnold carried Muir and left. But Hiiro and Winka didn't move from the spot and stared at the beam of water. It was quite a powerful attack.

“Is it fine for you not to escape?”

Wi: “... No need.”

Hiiro glanced at Winka and his eyes widened. Hiiro thought that she wanted to be far away from the battle before but her atmosphere had suddenly changed. He wasn't sure if she had an intimidating or ambitious air about her. Anyway he felt that she had a unique powerful aura like those that warriors had.

(That spear's not for show.)

Hiiro concluded that he could leave her as she was and quickly concentrated magic power onto his fingertip. He then pointed it towards the jet stream of water approaching him. He had written 『Ward防』. When he activated it, a bluish-white magic wall covered him. When the water hit the wall it repelled and dissipated.

Winka grabbed the handle of the spear, 《Bone Maiden of Victory》 and waved it. The short handle grew loudly with a clatter and changed into the long spear that Hiiro had first seen. She then rotated it with a swish through the air. The tremendous sound of the wind could be heard and Hiiro understood the intensity of its power.

Winka threw the rotated 《Bone Maiden of Victory》 towards the water. The spear didn't lose to the power of the water instead its rotation increased more and more and repelled the water while heading straight towards the Cow Crab.

Winka flew after the spear and picked up the rotating spear in a flash. She moved the spear faster than Hiiro could see.

“SWWOOOSH!?”

She splendidly slashed off all the legs on the Cow Crab's right side. Of course since they were camouflaged, the Cow Crabs in that portion screamed while their bodies were slashed apart and fell downwards into the water.

Her ability to counter the water gun and cut down the crabs in one slash surprised not

only Hiiro, but also Arnold and Muir.

(I'm surprised... To think she could do something like this...!)

Moreover she didn't waste a single movement, her ability was enough to fascinate the people watching her. Her elegant moves even captured Hiiro's eyes. She had to be skilled to be able to make such movements with a small body like hers.



[Muir]

Arnold: "She's doing pretty well... That Wi!"

Muir: "Y-yes... It's amazing!"

Arnold and Muir gazed at Winka and forgot to blink. Winka landed on the ground and slashed at the falling Cow Crabs.

《Bone Maiden of Victory》's blade was more than 40 centimetres long. It was shaped like a diamond, the blade was sharp and beautiful and had no chips on it.

Arnold: "Alright! I'll go hunt them too, so wait here, Muir."

Muir: "Eh? Ah... Yes."

It was what they usually did but for some reason Muir felt a prick of pain in her heart. Arnold defeated the Cow Crabs while wielding his broad sword.

While Muir was watching Hiiro and Winka do all they can, she felt regret since all she could do was watch.

The thought became more prominent especially when she saw Winka's strength because Winka had the same beastman blood and stature as her.

(I want to become stronger...)

Unfortunately Muir didn't have any fighting Arts. She didn't have any experience either. Muir felt that she was the only one that was an outsider here. Still neither Hiiro

nor Arnold thought of her as a hindrance.

However Muir thought that she couldn't remain useless forever. She clenched her fist while looking at the three's back. She earnestly thought that she would like to join them someday.



The huge Cow Crab's body was severed as a result of Winka's attack. The Cow Crabs that were cut off were now falling and scattering on the ground.

The falling Cow Crabs was defeated at the flash of light by Winka's spear which seemed to have terrified the huge Cow Crab. Winka's movement was too unpredictable and threw the Cow Crab for a loop. Midway the Cow Crabs fired a water attack at Winka but she easily repelled it with her spear.

Looking at her appearance Hiiro was also amazed but he wanted to deal the finishing blow on this important prey, the Cow Crab. That way it'd be added to his experience points and he would also feel satisfied in eating something that he'd killed.

"... We'll be eating it anyhow. Should I cook it as it is? Which reminds me, there's something I want to try."

When Hiiro's face slackened the magic wall made from 『Ward防』 that was covering him, disappeared. It seemed that the effects disappeared after a minute. He concentrated magic power into his fingertip and wrote a new character. Then just like that he ran straight towards the huge Cow Crab.

"Oi, Antenna Girl, get away from there if you don't want to be dragged in!"

When Hiiro said that to Winka, he jumped using the Cow Crab as a platform then he turned his fingertip towards the huge creature and released the character. The flying character activated before hitting it and suddenly changed into a sticky liquid that rained down. Hiiro then descended to the ground and wrote another new character.

"Alright! I'll finish with this! Burn! 《Word Magic》!"

Hiiro released a character again, this time it hit the huge Cow Crab.

BWOOM!

A small fire was produced when it hit.

BWWOOOOOOM!

The huge Cow Crab was instantly engulfed in the hell fire. The flames burnt as if an explosion had occurred and Arnold and co were dumbfounded.

“STAAAAAREE?!”

The huge Cow Crab crumbled and the flames also engulfed the falling cow crabs. The water had not extinguished the flames so the remaining Cow Crabs died while writhing around noisily. After a while the Cow Crabs scattered next to the spring began emitting a fragrant smell.

“Alright, complete annihilation!”

Although Hiiro was nodding alone, Arnold and co naturally wanted an explanation and were befuddled.

The remaining Cow Crabs ran away back into the spring. It was unnecessary to chase after them since they’d already hunted plenty of Cow Crabs.

Hiiro had a satisfied expression on his face because he’d heard the level up sound ring in his head.

Arnold: “Ah, your magic’s as absurd as ever, seriously...”

Arnold’s face stiffened but Winka, who didn’t know about Hiiro’s magic became interested in it and stared at Hiiro.

“Hiiro... You can use fire attribute magic?”

Winka asked Arnold but he made a complicated face.

Arnold: “Well ~, I don’t actually know ~. Hiiro doesn’t say any magic words. But well, there’s no mistake about it, his magic is omnipotent. It’s unique magic, so I can understand why he doesn’t want to talk about it.”

Unique magic was considerably powerful magic so if it caught the eye of a person with authority, it was highly likely that they'd confine the unique magician in order to make use of their power. That's why a lot of unique magicians do not openly display their magic.

Wi: "Hiiro's... Amazing."

For Winka who could not use magic, it was a mysterious and interesting thing. Moreover amongst magic users, Hiiro was a rare unique magician. Perhaps it was only natural that she was interested.

Arnold: "Hey Hiiro, what're you doing now?"

"I'm under no obligation to answer."

Arnold: "Hah, there it is."

While shrugging his shoulders, Arnold turned to face Winka and she looked as if she was thinking about something,

"Hiiro... Did you use oil?"

Hiiro unintentionally twitched his eyebrows upon hearing Winka's words.

Hiiro's strategy was very simple this time. First he covered the huge Cow Crab's body with 『Oil 油』. Then he used 『Fire 火』 to light up a flame. By doing so he could attack everything, even if they scattered the flames wouldn't disappear. Or so Hiiro had thought and it succeeded.

Also previous if he used 『Oil 油』 then he wouldn't be able to write a new character until the effects ended. But thanks to 《Multiple Chain Release》 he didn't have to wait for the effects of 『Oil 油』 to end and could finish off his attack with 『Fire 火』. This was what he wanted to try earlier.

He didn't prepare for the battle but he was fortunate to be able to ascertain the meaning of synergistic effect. But he was worried about Winka's remark. In this world even if he wrote the word 『Oil 油』, Winka couldn't read it. But Hiiro was shocked that she knew it was oil without hesitation.

Wi: "It smells like oil."

Hihiro understood her words when he saw her nose twitching.

Arnold: "Now that you mention it, this smells like oil."

Arnold also smelt the oil. If they could smell oil then they could guess that Hihiro produced oil.

Arnold: "Actually Wi, nice job noticing it. Even though I didn't notice at all..."

It's no surprise that Arnold would feel strange. This place was overflowing with an intense smell of burnt crabs. Winka was able to smell it before Arnold, a chef and a beastman with sharp sense. Arnold, the pure beastman had lost face.

Winka was pleased that she was praised and with a, "Ehhee!" her chest swelled with pride. It's a pity that she was expressionless. But her large chest was swaying with pride.

Even more than his admiration for Hihiro, Arnold dropped his shoulders in amazement when he saw that.

Arnold: "Mhm? Oil? There's no mistake that it's oil, right Hihiro? Oi, oi, you can even produce oil... Seriously unbelievable."

It was natural for Arnold to be surprised.

Arnold: "Ah, hold on, oil... Oil... Fumufumu."

Hihiro could tell what Arnold was thinking while chuckling.

"You're not going to tell me to make cooking oil or anything, right?"

Arnold: "Hah? Wh-what!"

"My magic is indeed omnipotent, but it has restrictions."

Arnold: "Re-restrictions?"

"The oil that I produce will disappear after a minute."

Arnold: "... Is that so?"

"Even if you use the oil for cooking, the oil itself will disappear after a minute, so I wouldn't recommend it."

In other words even if you use the oil for cooking, it and the flavour it adds would disappear so it isn't suitable for cooking.

Arnold: "I see... I thought we could save on oil expenses."

"Well, its fine if you just use to the oil to light up a fire, but you can't use it to cook."

Arnold dropped his shoulders, it was obvious that he was dejected.

GRUUUMBLE...

A cute grumbling sound resounded from Winka's stomach and everyone turned to look at her.

Wi: "I'm hungry..."

Wi was affected by the smell and stared greedily at Arnold.

Arnold: "Oh? Al-alright! Anyhow we got the prey! I'll prepare the Cow Crabs now."

"Ooh ~."

Winka happily thrust her fist up into the air.

Arnold: "Muir! Help me out!"

Muir: "Y-yes!"

Arnold called out to Muir, who was approaching them and walked towards the Cow Crabs scattered about. Winka also helped out, she exhibited extraordinary strength for someone with slender arms. She picked up a number of Cow Crabs and carried them to where Arnold was. As for Hiirō, he just sat down on the spot while quietly waiting for the dish to be cooked.

"No, no, help out!"

Arnold shouted but Hihiro ignored him while intending to nap. He leaned against a tree and closed his eyes. His behaviour seemed to show that he'd work enough and the rest was up to them.

Arnold who'd got used to Hihiro's attitude, grumbled and continued cooking while being consoled by Muir.



Because there was no table, large leaves were placed on the ground and on top of that were the dishes that Arnold had made.

Arnold: "Let's eat! You'll understand why I dragged you all the way out here when you eat this!"

Hihiro thought that the food quality was as expected of a chef. He was really impressed at the various dishes made from the Cow Crabs. Winka's eyes also lit up and she was puzzled at how to eat the dishes.

Arnold: "《Sauté Cow Crab》, 《Fried Cow Crab》, 《Cow Crab and Nut Salad》, 《Steamed Crab Shell》 and many others!"

Moreover the amount was really something considering there was only Cow Crabs.

Hihiro desperately tried to stop his saliva from overflowing. First he held the 《Fried Cow Crab》 in his hands and put sauce on it.

"Om nom... Oh!"

The crunchy texture and the thick crab taste spread inside of his mouth. Moreover the sauce made from the crab paste matched nicely with the fried cow crab, even though it was miso.

Next he tried the 《Steamed Crab Shell》, he was able to eat the shell because it was steamed. When he took a bite it was like he was eating a variety of Chinese dumplings and the hot crab juices burst out from inside. Although it was hot enough to burn him, there were crab eggs inside of it so he couldn't contain his excitement and his hands didn't stop. He was indulging himself.

“How’s it Hiiro?”

Arnold asked while smiling.

“Your cooking’s the only thing I approve of.”

Arnold: “Hooohoooh ~, that’s right, that’s right ~. Let’s discuss the only thing part later. As expected of me!”

Arnold was completely rapturous and was smiling annoyingly but Hiiro was feeling good right now so he ignored him. Besides, Hiiro was satisfied with all the dishes Arnold made.

Wi: “Om nom... Om nom... Om nom... Om nom...”

Eating wholeheartedly was exactly like this. Winka did not waver from people watching her and moved her hands at high speed while stuffing the food into her mouth. The antenna on her head was also bouncing around happily.

Muir: “A-ah... Hiiro-san...?”

“Mhm?”

When he’d noticed Muir had come next to him. In her hand was a long piece of bread that looked like a roll. The bread was cut at the centre and crab meat was tightly stuffed inside.

“P-pl-pl-please eat this!”

Muir said as she stuck the bread out to him.

“What? Are you not eating?”

Muir: “Ah, mhm... this is...”

Muir blushed as she glanced at Hiiro but Hiiro didn’t know what was wrong and frowned. Then Arnold said in a displeased voice.

“Tsk, that’s Muir’s 《Crab Cream Bread》 ... I’m jealous.”

While muttering, “Why’d she only make it for Hiiro”, he stuffed the food into his mouth out of despair.

“Hoh, so the Chibi made this.”

Muir: “Ah, ye-yes! Pl-please have some!”

Hiiro received it and took a bite.

“On nom nom nom...!?”

“H-h-h-how is it?!”

Muir asked anxiously.

Hiiro thought it tasted like a crab cream croquette. However there was more crab meat packed inside than he’d thought. It was delicious.

“... Let’s see, it’s not bad. But if you bake the bread it’d be more delicious.”

Muir: “Ah... Is that so?”

Muir became disheartened. But Hiiro had eaten all of the bread in he was holding.

Muir: “Hi-Hihiro-san!”

“But well, it’s delicious.”

Hiiro answered while licking the cream off his fingers. Muir brightened up upon those words.

Muir: “Re-really?! Ehehe! I will do even better next time!”

“Ah, I’ll be waiting.”

Muir: “Yes! Ehehe.”

Arnold felt conflicted seeing Muir smile so cutely. He was glad that his beloved daughter was pleased. However he didn’t like the fact that her smile was directed at a man.

“Damn... I won’t give you Muir! I won’t!”

Arnold was displaying a grand attitude of idiot parent-ness.

STARE...

Muir: “Puh?! W-wi-san!”

Before Muir knew it Winka had appeared next to her and was staring so she was surprised.

“... Wi wants too.”

Muir: “Eh... Mhm...”

Wi: “Give me some bread...?”

Muir looked at Winka who gulped while titling her head and started getting flustered when she understood her real intention.

Muir: “I, I understand! I will prepare it now!”

Wi: “Ok... I’ll wait.”

While Muir went to go make Winka’s portion, Arnold was casually eating and said.

“Hey Wi, what race are you from?”

“...?”

Arnold: “Ah, my bad. I worded it wrong again. Let me see, you’re half beastman, right?”

Wi: “Yup.”

Arnold: “I wanna ask about your beastman race, in other words, your dad’s race.”

But before Winka could answer, Hihiro asked.

“Why’re you asking that for? Is something wrong?”

Arnold: “No, even if I look like this I’m from the 【Dog-kin】 . So I have confidence in my sense of smell.”

Arnold brought up the story about him not noticing the oil smell before.

『Dog-kin’s』 have an excellent sense of smell so he wanted to know why Winka noticed the smell when he didn’t.

“I see. So it’s about your hurt pride, huh?”

Arnold: “No, no. It’s not something that dramatic! It’s just well, I just wanna know Wi’s secret...”

Muir: “Uncle... Do you really want to know a girl’s secret...?”

Arnold: “Eh? Mu-muir...?”

Muir was holding bread for Winka in her slightly trembling hands.

She never thought that her guardian, Arnold, would say such a thing.

Arnold: “I-it’s a bit different than that, Muir! I-i-i-i-it’s a misunderstanding! I just wanna know what race her dad’s from!”

Muir: “Eh? Race?”

When Muir heard the explanation she was honestly relived and placed a hand on her chest before exhaling. But then she quickly looked anxious as she turned to face Arnold.

Muir: “But Uncle, Wi-san might not want to talk about it, you know?”

Arnold: “Now that you mention it that might be true.”

It was like the conversation between the two ended.

Wi: “I don’t know my race...?”

Winka, herself didn’t look like she cared at all. She wasn’t told anything about her father.

Arnold: “Come to think of it, Wi was still very young when your parents split up right?”

Wi: “Yup.”

Muir: “B-but aren’t you curious, Wi-san?”

Wi: “About what?”

Muir: “About the 『Beastman』 blood flowing in you!”

Wi: “Nope... Not really.”

Arnold and Muir’s feigned laughter resounded when they saw her frankness. Hiiro brought up a topic.

“If you take your sense of smell into consideration, isn’t your race above the Old Man’s? Aren’t there races like that?”

Arnold: “Well... There shouldn’t be any existing race with a better sense of smell than the 『Dog-kin』. Well even amongst 『Dog-kin』, there are various races like 『Blue Ears』 like me or 『Red Ears』 characterised by their red hair. But Wi has blonde hair. I’ve never seen a 『Dog-kin』 race like that before. Since Wi’s has an excellent sense of smell, I thought she’d be from the same race...”

Arnold stared at Winka as if he was observing her and tilted his head.

Arnold: “But, I’ve got a feeling it’s something different.”

“When you say ‘existing races’ that must mean that there are races no longer around, right?”

Arnold: “Ah? Well yeah. Rather than old, there were races amongst us that have become legend.”

“Hoh.”

Hiiro’s intellectual curiosity perked up and his eyes shone.

Arnold: “They’re the 《Three Great Beastman》, but now they’re treated as mythical

beasts who were our ancestors. One of them those races was the 『Golden Fox』, they had a better sense of smell than the 『Dog-kin』.”

“Hoh. It’s the first time I’ve heard that there were races like that.”

Arnold: “Well, in the end it’s just a legend. Within the 『Golden Fox』 race, the people called 『Nine-tails』 seem to be especially terrifying, you know? They can freely beastify and transform their body into something as big as a mountain.”

Even in Japan, where Hiiro was from, and 『Nine-tails』 were special youkai spoken about in folklore. It was a powerful youkai and it seemed that even other youkais were afraid of its existence.

Even in this world people who were called 『Nine-tails』 were special. It was unfortunate that it was already extinct and Hiiro couldn’t contain his disappointment.

Hiiro had something else he was interested in so he asked Arnold.

“Beastify... Can beastmans do something like that?”

Arnold: “Mhm? Well the 『Nine-tail’s』 beastification is special. It’s normally impossible. On the contrary, some people who have beastman blood can’t control the power of the beast inside of them and go on rampages.”

“Hoh, that’s also a really interesting story.”

Arnold: “Well, it becomes a disaster afterwards.”

Hiiro looked at Arnold who was staring off into the distance and didn’t pursue it any further. He’d thought that Arnold probably experienced something like that before and judged that it was better to ask later.

Muir: “Ah, by the way is your conversation with Wi-san finished, Uncle?”

Arnold: “Mhm? Well, Wi doesn’t know anything about her race, her sense of smell probably developed like that from birth. Occasionally there are people like that.”

Arnold nodded his head as if he was trying to persuade himself.



[Muir]

From there Hiiro and co had enjoyed the rest of the crab dishes, cleaned up, and left
【Rogi Mountains】. Muir was on cloud-nine while walking.

(I'm happy that our companions have increased.)

From here they were going with Winka to the closest town so for a while it'd be a four person journey. Muir was getting really cheerful.

The fact that Winka was a woman made her smile because there were conversations that couldn't be discussed unless you're a woman.

While she was thinking what kind of questions she should ask, something bothered her so she asked.

"Wi-san, is your dad in the human world?"

"... I don't know."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah..."

"Do you have any clues?"

Winka pointed to the spear on her back (which was shortened), 《Bone Maiden of Victory》. Thereupon Arnold answered.

"Isn't that just a spear...? Isn't that the same as not having a clue...?"

There was no way that the spear could tell her which way to go, it was certainly tough to find clues with just the spear.

"Ah, yeah. What happened to your mum, Wi? Doesn't she know something?"

Winka shook her head in denial.

“Ma died a long time ago.”

“... I’m sorry, I must have brought up some painful memories.”

“Nah, it was a long time ago. So I’m fine now.”

“I-is that so, got it. You really don’t have any clues?”

Winka thought a little before speaking.

“Before Ma died, she told me that pops had wanderlust.”

“Wanderlust?”

“That’s why he’s travelling all over the world.”

“Puh, I see. If so then all the more difficult to find him.”

That was just the same as having almost having no clues. It would also be more difficult to find someone that often wandered around.

“Really?”

Hiiro interrupted the two’s conversation.

“What do you mean, Hiiro?”

“If he travels here and there, then there’s a high chance that he’d stop at various towns and villages. So you can always get clues about him from those towns and villages.”

“... That’s true.”

Arnold gave a big nod.

“If you follow those clues, won’t you catch up to him someday? You also came here because you heard rumours that he was here.”

“Oh ~, yeah. It’s just like Hiiro said.”

“Yup... Wi won’t give up. I’ll find pops.”

“Come to think of it, why’re you looking for your dad, Wi?”

This was the question Muir wanted to ask.

“When I was little... Pops said he was being targeted.”

“Eh? Yo-your dad was?”

It wasn’t just Muir, Hiiro and Arnold were also surprised.

“Yup... Ma said that’s why he left up and went off somewhere. He didn’t wanna be a nuisance to us so he left.”

It seemed like her beastman father was being targeted by someone and he thought that those people would also target his family so he left to go on a journey alone.

He’d concluded that if he did that, he’d be the only one targeted.

“I see, so your dad didn’t want harm to befall your family because of him. Wait a minute? Then why are you searching for your dad, Wi?”

Winka’s face slightly tensed upon hearing Arnold’s question.

Yes, she was going against the wishes of her father. Danger increased the closer she got to him. Still she’d continue looking for her father. Why?

“Wi will protect pops...”

“...”

“That’s the reason Wi became strong. I’ll protect him.”

There was no hesitation in her eyes, they overflowing with confidence. She was different from when she was younger, now she had confidence that she could fight together with her father.

Arnold deeply exhaled when he heard about how strong her determination.

“Hah ~, you’re amazing, Wi. There’s not many who can decide their goals at your age.”

“You’re amazing... Wi-san.”

Muir noticed that she was jealous of Winka, who was the same age as her, having firm goals and standing on her own two feet.

This won’t do. Muir can’t grow if she’s always being protected. She made up her mind to be strong like Winka.



Arnold folded his arms, glanced at Winka and asked.

“So Wi, have you been travelling in the human world all this time?”

“Yup... Wi started her journey when she was 7 years old.”

“Fr-from such a young age?! Do-don’t tell me you’ve been travelling alone... Right?”

“Nope, I travelled alone. Ah, but sometimes there would be someone else, like this.”

“We-well of course... Wait, how old are you now?”

“Mhm... 14 years old...?”

“No, even if you ask me... But 14 years old, huh.... Well I can kinda tell from your statue, still you’re well developed unlike Muir ———.”

“Uncle?”

“Eek!”

He incurred Muir’s wrath at the obvious slipup. He was laughing but his eyes weren’t laughing at all. Arnold was flustered and quickly changed the topic.

“B-but well, I’m glad you weren’t travelling alone!”

It was surprising to hear that she had been travelling alone at the age of 7 but if she had companions that she could trust then Arnold was honestly glad.

But her next words were unexpected.

“But, when Wi talked about herself everyone left to go somewhere.”

It went silent. Yes, Arnold had forgotten that in this world, she was a taboo, half-breed. The atmosphere became heavy but then she smiled warmly.

“That’s why Wi is happy that there are people who accept her like this...”

“That smile’s unfair!” Arnold shouted in his mind in amazement. He wanted to hug her but resisted and stroked her head.

“I see, well done, Wi.”

Wi felt good and narrowed her eyes. Then she thought of something and unsteadily headed towards Hihiro. She slightly leaned over and presented her head to him

“... What do you want?”

Hihiro couldn’t understand the meaning behind her actions. Arnold sighed at Hihiro’s thick-headedness.

“Oi, oi, you can’t do that, Hihiro-san.”

Hihiro made a displeased face.

“What do you mean?”

“Wi wants you to pat her head.”

“Hah? Why do I have to do something like that?”

“Isn’t it fine? Just stroke her head. Wi’s been working hard up until now.”

Wi’s eyes shine in expectation but Hihiro ignored her and turned away.

“I refuse. In the first place, the Antenna Girl isn’t the only one working hard. Certainly, there are things in her past that I sympathise with, but she’s the one who decided how she’d live. Or is she doing it because she wants to be praised?”

Winka looked into Hihiro’s eyes and shook her head from left to right.

“I’m not.”

“Oi, oi Hihiro, isn’t your reasoning weird? It’s just patting her head ——.”

“It’s fine.”

Winka interrupted Arnold.

“Eh... But Wi...”

“No, it’s just as Hihiro said, Wi didn’t go on this journey because she wanted to be praised for it.”

Everyone silently watched Winka.

“Hihiro isn’t wrong. Wi is the one who’s wrong.”

No one else could add anything further, if the person herself said so. But for some reason she was still turning her head towards Hihiro.

“... Oi, so then what’s this about?”

“I don’t wanna be praised. I just want Hihiro to pat my head.”

“Ouwah! So boldly?!”

“Wh-what’s wrong, Muir?”

Since Muir suddenly shouted while blushing, Arnold, who was nearby was surprised and looked at her, “I-i-i-i-it’s nothing!” She said while furiously shaking her head.

“There’s no way I would pat your head if I didn’t have a reason to.”

Arnold thought that it was fine to just pat her head but Hihiro stubbornly refused. Winka, who was despondent, said to Hihiro with upturned eyes.

“Then what do I have to do to get you to pat my head?”

“No, in the first place why do I have to pat your head.”

GLIMMER GLIMMER GLIMMER

“Why...”

GLIMMER GLIMMER GLIMMER

“Do I...”

GLIMMER GLIMMER GLIMMER

“... Hah.”

Hiiro lost to the power of her cloudy eyes and shrugged his shoulders.

“In that case, do an especially good thing if you want me to pat your head. Then I’ll think about it.”

Hiiro succumbed to her persistence. Winka was enthusiastic about Hiiro’s compromise but she frowned and tilted her head.

“What kind of good thing?”

“Think for yourself.”

He didn’t say anymore and quickened his pace. Winka was desperately thinking about what was good while walking.

Midway Muir raised her voice and said something, “I, I want to be patted too!” But Hiiro didn’t notice because he was reconfirming his 《Status》 .

CHAPTER 2

THE MONSTER'S VOICE

[Muir]

After walking for a while something crawled out of the thicket with a rustle. It was a monster. It must have fought something because it had pitiful wounds all over its body. Hihiro and co thought it would stagger towards them but it didn't notice them at all and collapsed from exhaustion. The four were concerned and slowly approached it.

"Th-that's a..."

"H-how awful..."

Arnold looked at the monster's wounds and frowned unintentionally. Muir was astonished and covered her mouth with her hands.

The monster looked like it was in serious condition and despite its injuries it had still managed to desperately run until now. Its breathing also seemed faint.

"This monster's called a Sky Wolf. It's a strong rank B monster."

Monster ranks starting from the lowest: F • E • D • C • B • A • S • SS • SSS. B rank monsters were quite strong and one needed to be at a considerable level to beat them individually.

Hihiro had seen this monster in the reference book so he knew about it. It looked like a wolf covered in clear blue fur but it was more than five metres long. Furthermore there were wings on its back and although it wasn't very good at flying, it was still a monster that could soar in the skies.

The Sky Wolf in front of them was about three metres long and had wings on its back. However the wings looked as if it had been torn in many places.

"... We can help him."

Winka said as she took a cloth from the bag on her waist and approached it to wipe away the blood. The Sky Wolf weakly opened its eyes in confirmation and then,

“*Grrrr!*”

The Sky Wolf suddenly opened its mouth wide and snarled trying to repel the approaching Winka. It probably thought that it was going to get killed.

Normally people would feel fearful when approaching a Sky Wolf that was growling in hostility and wariness but Winka continued to slowly approach the Sky Wolf with no fear.

The Sky Wolf felt no hostility from Winka and stopped growling but it didn't avert its gaze from her.

Winka carefully approached the Sky Wolf and gently wiped the blood on its body with the cloth in her hand.

The Sky Wolf did not try to threaten her instead it closed its eyes as if leaving its body to her.

The Sky Wolf's head was also bleeding and the cloth was quickly dyed red. The laceration on its head was the biggest and if left alone it would cause the wolf to bleed to death.

Muir and Arnold also wanted to help out and searched inside of their bags before pulling out pieces of cloth but Hihiro quickly walked passed them.

“Move, Antenna Girl.”

“... Eh?”

Then something happened that surprised Arnold and Muir, Hihiro had approached the Sky Wolf and started writing something on its body.

(Eh... Is he helping it!?)

Based on Hihiro's previous actions, Muir never would have thought that Hihiro would heal the Sky Wolf without the promise of a reward. But that thought was quickly

betrayed.

After writing 『Heal 治』, Hihiro instantly activated it then a faint bluish-white light engulfed the Sky Wolf. Winka opened her eyes wide at seeing the wounds heal.

Muir wasn't surprised as she had seen Hihiro cure his wound like this before but she was curious as to why he did such a thing for the Sky Wolf.

The wounds took a while to heal and when they were healed the Sky Wolf stood up and stared at them. No, actually, it was looking at Hihiro and Winka. The Sky Wolf brought its face closer towards the two. Muir thought that it was going to eat them but the pair stood fixed on the spot so she kept quiet.

———Lick.

The Sky Wolf gently licked their faces then it put its face between the two and playfully moved its face. It didn't feel like attacking at all, on the contrary it liked Hihiro and co.

Confirming, that for the time being, they were in no danger of being attacked, Arnold exhaled loudly and looked as if he wanted to ask a question.

"Hey Hihiro, why'd you heal it? You didn't even demand for anything in return."

Muir nodded in agreement beside him.

"Puh, you guys wouldn't understand this, but cool-looking wolves are justice."

"... Hah?"

It was something that only Hihiro knew but from what Arnold had heard, Hihiro was touched by the fact that he got to see such a big wolf in this fantasy world. Whether it was because he was a man or some other reason, Hihiro thought that big wolves were cool. Besides Hihiro also liked animals and he especially liked dogs.

When Hihiro saw that such a being was lying down on the ground full of wounds he healed it because he wanted to see how it moved. In the end Hihiro was just acting on his desires but for the Sky Wolf it was nothing other than luck.

"Thanks, Hihiro."

“You don’t need to thank me. I healed the wolf only for myself. Hey Wolf, try running for a bit.”

The Sky Wolf nodded and ran at a staggering speed. Hiiro was impressed at the wolf’s lively movements and his eyes shone.

“Oh ~, it looks cool!”

It was the first time Arnold had seen Hiiro act like this and he stared at him absentmindedly. Muir who was also watching Hiiro act like a child didn’t know why her cheeks were heating up.

(S-so Hiiro-san can laugh innocently like that...)

She was moved by Hiiro’s rare smile.



[Hiiro]

“Hey Wolf! Let me ride you this time!”

“Woof!”

The Sky Wolf bent its legs and lifted Hiiro up by his clothes.

“... Wi too.”

Apparently Winka wanted to ride as well, her face flushed with excitement.

“Can you handle two people riding you?”

“Woof!”

Even with two people riding it, the Sky Wolf’s speed didn’t drop. The scenery swished passed them at great speed as if they were watching from inside of a train and the wind blew onto their bodies.

Hiiro was wrapped in fluffy fur, he’d felt good that he got to experience something

fantasy-like. He thought that he was only able to experience something like this because he was in a different world.

“Mhm? What’s wrong?”

Hihiro tilted his head but the Sky Wolf pulled on his clothes again.

“Hihiro, this Wolf has somewhere it has to go.”

Winka said expressionlessly and they looked at her in wonder.

“... You can understand what he’s saying?”

“No way, Wi. You understand what the Sky Wolf’s saying?”

Arnold couldn’t believe it either so he asked her. Winka nodded.

“I understand.”

“Really?”

Arnold looked at Winka suspiciously but the Sky Wolf nodded its head in affirmation. Everyone including Hihiro couldn’t hide their surprise and were blinking.

“Your appetite for food, your speech, conduct and being able to converse with monsters. Just how much of a mysterious-chan are you, Wi...?”

Arnold’s remark was right, it would have been strange for anyone to accept but she was a completely eccentric person so it was already decided that she would be mysterious-chan.

Winka was listening to the Sky Wolf’s growls and when it’d finished she turned to face them. She said that the Sky Wolf had escaped from a nearby establishment, where many of his kind were being treated horribly by humans. The Sky Wolf had found a gap and sneaked out. It thought that it could save its kin after its wounds had healed.

“Establishment? What establishment? Is it close to here?”

Arnold asked doubtfully. The Sky Wolf growled again and Winka understood.

“It’s located to the far East.”

Winka pointed in the East direction. It was close to the country border where Hiiro and co were headed.

“The establishment is called 【Buscador】 .”

“Buscador, huh...”

“Do you know what it is, Hiiro?”

“... Nope.”

Hiiro couldn’t say that he definitely knew but when he was in Japan he’d read it in some books. However Hiiro wasn’t sure if the meaning of the word remained the same in this world so he didn’t say.

(It meant 《Seeker》 in Spanish, right?)

Hiiro shrugged his shoulders thinking about what they could be seeking. He didn’t speak Spanish but remembered the meaning. Of course it was highly possible that it was a homonym but if what the Sky Wolf said was true, he had no doubt that the Sky Wolf and his kin wanted to escape from the establishment. Besides the wound it had gotten was from the establishment. In other words if the meaning of 【Buscador】 really meant 《Seeker》 then the answer Hiiro predicted was this,

(Monster testing ground... Or possibly a processing plant.)

It was probably the former but if they were collecting monsters in order to seek something then it was more fitting to use the word ‘experiment’.

Hiiro wondered if he should say something to Arnold and co but if he did there was a high possibility he’d get involved in something troublesome again. Even though it’s a monster their sense of justice might make them want to stop whatever awful things were going on.

If that happened it would be troublesome. Although they weren’t in a hurry to reach their destination the people from 《Beast Cage》 were still after them and Hiiro

thought it was better to cross the border as soon as they could.

The longer it took, the harder it would be to cross the border.

If it came to it Hiiro could escape alone using his 《Word Magic》 but it was painful to lose Arnold's beastman knowledge and cooking skills. It was mainly the latter, being able to receive benefits while travelling made him really happy. Hiiro had gotten used to eating Arnold's cooking and it was somewhat difficult to part with that.

Hiiro thought about what to do while crossing his arms then,

"A lot of the Wolf's family was killed."

Winka said and Arnold and co's faces paled.

"There were a lot of monsters there but everyone was shot up with some weird drug, had their body was remodelled and then they died. It seems that only the Wolf's family is left now."

"W-why... such a thing..."

Muir said sadly and looked at Winka.

"The wolf said it wants to save them. It wants to save everyone."

Hiiro felt that the situation was very suspicious. Winka gently stroked the wolf's face. It nodded and turned to face them.



[Arnold]

"This is where we say goodbye."

At Winka's sudden words Arnold and Muir said, "Hah?"

"W-why all of a sudden, Wi...?"

For the time being Arnold decided to ask her what she meant.

“Wi is going together with the Wolf.”

“You’re going to help a monster?”

“No, I’m helping this Wolf’s family.”

Winka said but she was helping a monster. The thing that Arnold and co always hunt. Of course the Sky Wolf had yet to attack them but Sky Wolves were still classified as monsters.

It was certainly a sympathetic story but Arnold questioned why Winka chose to help the Sky Wolf without hesitation.

“... Why’re you helping, Wi? It’s an atrocious story but you don’t have any obligation to, right?”

“Yup... It’s not an obligation.”

“Then why?”

“Because that has nothing to do with it...”

“Eh?”

“Wi is going to help him because Wi wants to. That’s all there is to it...?”

Wi said as if it was natural and Arnold became more confused. Although Arnold had asked the question he felt as if he was being questioned.

Her ideology was, to put it briefly, helping those who were in trouble. It was an extremely simple ideology. She had no doubts about it, she acted upon her feelings.

(That’s just like him...)

Arnold thought and glimpsed at Hiroyuki whose eyes were closed as if he was thinking about something.

(Doing something because they want to do it. Saying extreme things and acting upon their desires. Yeah these two people vaguely resemble each other.)

Their insatiable appetites and the atmosphere around them was exactly the same.

“Besides...”

Winka said while looking a little lonely.

“It’s better for family to be together.”

Winka said as she jumped onto the Wolf’s back. Arnold thought her back looked somewhat lonely.

(Come to think of it, Wi’s looking for her dad...)

That was probably why she was so invested in this.

“I don’t want to drag you guys into this. I’ll go alone.”

“Hey Wi, wait——.”

“It’s only been a short time, but I had fun. Thanks everyone...”

Her usual emotionless face had a smile on it. Her childish face looked very mature and it was so beautiful that she could grab onto the hearts of the people looking at her. But it was a very painful and fleeting smile. Arnold felt that she had a broken smile.

Her expression instantly changed and went back to normal, no, it was stiffer than usual, and she stroked the Sky Wolf’s head.

“Let’s go.”

“Woof!”

The Sky Wolf and Winka left in an instance. Arnold regretted not stopping her and at the same time he questioned himself on whether or not it was okay to leave it up to her.

“Hey, Uncle.”

“What’s wrong, Muir?”

“... I’m weak.”

“... Muir?”

Arnold went blank thinking about what she wanted to confess.

“I’m weak, that’s why I know I shouldn’t say something like this...”

“Muir...”

“But I want to help Wi-san and the Wolf!”

Muir said that she was weak. All she could do during battle was run around the place, hiding and being protected. It was wrong for her to choose such a dangerous path. But even if she knew that, she just couldn’t ignore it. She couldn’t ignore Winka’s smiling face or the unfortunate Sky Wolf and keep on travelling. If she was to continue her journey and something happened to Winka, she would regret it.

It was easy to guess what Muir was thinking since Arnold had known her for a long time.

(Muir already prepared herself. If something were to happen I’ll definitely protect her!)

Arnold decided and turned to face the other person in their group, who was silent up until now.

“Hey Hiiro, won’t you come with me to 【Buscador】 ?”



[Hiiro]

(I knew it), Hiiro thought. Muir also looked towards Hiiro waiting for his approval.

He knew that they’d make a choice like this because they were soft-hearted but he still hadn’t collected his thoughts so he couldn’t answer them easily.

“Hey, Old Man, you’re aware that we’re being chased, aren’t you?”

“Ah.”

Arnold strongly replied. It seemed that he had thought a lot about it before he'd replied.

“Hihiro, I know you don't do favours if you don't get anything in return, that's why I won't force you. You helped out Muir once and I thank you for that. You don't have to keep going along with our selfishness.”

At that moment Muir looked sad but Hihiro didn't notice.

“So if you say you don't wanna then I'll give up. Travelling with you is fun and you really are strong. But we don't wanna be any more troublesome. Whatever your answer is we'll accept it.”

Muir nodded trying to convince herself and like Arnold, she also looked towards him. Hihiro also stared back at them.

“... That reminds me, I owe you for something, Old Man.”

“... Hah? You owe me? What're you talking about?”

Arnold really didn't know what Hihiro was talking about and he stared at Hihiro blankly as question marks began floating above his head.

“Did you forget? It was when we fought with that Topknot.”

Yes, the other day Hihiro fought against a man named Folse, the one who commanded 《Beast Cage》. Folse was extremely strong and just when Hihiro was about to be killed, Arnold had saved him by throwing his sword towards Folse. Thanks to Arnold, Hihiro's life had been saved.

Hihiro had told him about that time but Arnold didn't remember at all and tilted his head. Upon seeing that, Hihiro said bluntly.

“I'll repay that debt but after this I owe you nothing. The next time you ask me you have to prepare satisfactory compensation for me.”

Hihiro said as he walked towards the direction that the Sky Wolf had gone. Arnold

who'd been staring at Hiiro absentmindedly, started laughing,

"What the, seriously, you're not very honest are you?!"

Hiiro honestly just wanted to pay back his debt but Arnold misunderstood and thought he was a tsundere. Muir also thought the same as Arnold and thought that was Hiiro's attitude,

"Hiiro-san's kind of cute..."

Hiiro wasn't being a tsundere but it goes without saying that Hiiro's popularity had increased.

They didn't know that Hiiro's real aim was the valuable books and data that might be at the testing ground.

(It'll be good if I can also read the research data at least once.)

After all Hiiro was a person who pursued his desires no matter where it took him.



People in white coats were moving around restlessly while someone with a big body was sleeping at a desk.

"Chief, please wake up!"

The man who was sleeping was the Chief and the man who was raising his voice trying to wake him up was his subordinate.

"... Guga ~."

But the Chief's snoring only got louder. As a last resort his subordinate took something out of his pocket. It had a sweet smell and was shaped like a donut. He brought it close to the chief's nose.

TWITCH TWITCH TWITCH

The Chief's nose started twitching bit by bit and just when his subordinate had

thought that he was going to snap his eyes opened, the Chief's mouth opened wide and tried to eat the donut-like sweet in front of him.

CLINK!

The donut-like sweet instantly disappeared from its spot and the only thing that remained was the impact of his teeth colliding.

"Nuh! How awful of you! I won't forget this!"

The Chief screamed tearfully while glaring at his subordinate in despair.

"Oh, good morning, Chief. I have several things to report to you."

"Someday I'll turn you into sweets and eat you up, Pevin!"

"That's scary. But I have already prepared your sweets for you."

"What?! Is that true?!"

"Yes, please look that way."

A solid case filled with cakes entered his sight.

"Uohoh ~! That's a ceke, is it not!?"

The Chief's eyes shone like a child who'd just found a new toy.

"Chief, it is a cake not a ceke. You got it wrong. By the way this is a chocolate cake."

"Ooh ~! That's popular in the beast kingdom right now. It's called 《Chocoret》, right? Ooh ~, it's so brown. I can eat it, right?"

"Please do so after you finish your work."

The man called Pevin adjusted his glasses while answering.

"You mean it, right?! Let's get on with it! Mhm? What do I have to do?"

The way he spoke didn't match with his huge body or rather his fat body. The chief's

hair was swept back and he was quite fat. His number one trait was his extremely big, pig-like nose and he wore a monocle.

“First of all, a little problem has occurred so please listen.”

“Problem? What kind of problem?”

“One of the Sky Wolves used in the experiment has escaped.”

“Puh, huh? Did you kill it?”

“No, we managed to injure it before it escaped. Well, it will die with that kind of wound anyway and no one will help it because it is a monster.”

“Then it’s no problem! But lately, hasn’t the number of specimens decreased?”

“Yes, that is the main issue. Right now we only have the Sky Wolves but there are only seven of them. We have to replace them as soon as possible... The contacts at the organisation are here. Would you like to start negotiating with them?”

The Chief made a really unpleasant face.

“Eh ~, it’s really troublesome, isn’t it ~?”

“This is also for the sake of research.”

“Yeh ~, I get it but I don’t like them very much, you know?”

“You cannot do business if you only do what you want.”

“Yeh ~, it can’t be helped. Come to think of it, I was informed the other day that they were on their way. I wonder if they brought me some specimens.”

“That would be good.”

“Well, they bring specimens worth experimenting on so they’re useful.”

The Chief said while sniffing and then he opened his mouth and uttered.

“Is something wrong?”

“Mhm ~, come to think of it, it’s nearly time to show *that* off.”

“... But it is still not possible to control *that* yet.”

“What are you saying, Pevin? Failure is essential for experimentation, right?”

“I understand. Well since they are coming would you like to make the remaining Sky Wolves *its* opponents?”

“Ooh ~, that would be fun, yes!?”

“Then I will go make the preparations.”

Pevin lightly bowed and tried to leave but,

“Ah, I can eat the sweets now, right?”

“Chief, you still have work to do.”

“Uh ~, you’re awful! It’s wrong! Someday, I’ll def~initely turn you into sweets and eat you ~!”

Pavin gave a backwards glance at the Chief, who was throwing his arms and legs around in a tantrum like a kid. Pavin went back to his work and completely ignored him.

However the Chief couldn’t endure it and silently ate the sweets in the case. Pevin preaching him about eating the sweets is another story.



“Here?”

Winka who’d separated from Hiroyuki and co, had arrived at a big building on the back of the Sky Wolf. The building was white and a wired fence surrounded it. It was surrounded by rocks, no, to be precise they built the complex within those rocks.

There was only one entrance which had a solid iron door, additionally Winka had discovered the keyhole.

“Wolf is... No, let’s give you a name. Yup... Let’s call you Winger, since you have wings, okay?”

The Sky Wolf also liked the name and nodded its head.

“Where did you escape from, Winger?”

Winka asked and Winger steadily guided her to the place that it had escaped from. Winka went behind the rocky area and then Winger stuck its nose out to indicate the place.

“Mhm... Where?”

Winka looked around and she noticed that one of the windows was broken. She could tell by looking at the other windows that a wire grid should have been attached. It was likely that Winger prepared itself for injury and rammed the window. The big injury on its head was caused by this action.

“Do we enter from there?”

Winka didn’t have any strategies or rather she didn’t think about it at all. Her plan was to go inside, beat the bad guys, then save Winger’s family. When Winka and Winger approached the complex,

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP!

A piercing siren sounded. Winka widened her eyes upon hearing the sound and was confident that their presence had been discovered.

“Let’s keep going, Winger!”

“Woof!”

She’d thought that since it was already like this, she had no choice but to move and jumped through the window that Winger had escaped from.



The sound of the siren also reached Hiiro and co's ears.

"Hey Hiiro, what's this sound?"

Arnold asked while running.

"It's probably some fool acting like an idiot, right?"

"...?"

Hiiro didn't think that Winka was one for strategies like he was. If anything she solved things by pushing through, much like Arnold did. Hence Hiiro, who could tell that it was a testing ground, knew that she'd been found out by the sounds of the siren. Although he'd thought that it was foolish to rush in without a plan, it was very impressive for her to be able to rush into such a dangerous place for other people, no, for a monster.

"Anyway, we should hurry up. Hold on tightly, Muir!"

"Y-yes!"

Arnold said as he sped up with Muir in his arms. Hiiro muttered that it was no use but followed him anyway.



It wasn't just Winka and co who were surprised by the siren, the people inside of the establishment were also surprised.

"What is going on?"

Pevin asked someone. That person seemed to be in a hurry.

"There seems to be an intruder! There's also a magic reaction from the escaped Sky Wolf."

There were needles hanging at the end of threads inside a ball that looked like a crystal

ball. One of those needles was spinning around and glowing in a red light. This was a magic detector. While the person was watching it, he'd noticed that Pevin was there. Another needle was moving around while glowing blue, it indicated the presence of another intruder.

"Who's that?"

"I do not know! But I am certain it is a person."

Pevin thought a little bit then,

"I will report this to the Chief. Do not kill the intruders, catch them if possible."

"I, I understand!"

Pevin quickly headed straight to the Chief.

A white-robed man, unlike the ones the researchers wore, stood motionlessly in front of a door.

"How did you get to a place like this?"

The man with whom Pevin spoke was the contact from the organisation and he'd been talking with the Chief until some time ago. They had a deep relationship with the organisation. The organisation provided them monsters for experimentation. Of course 【Buscador】 also provided suitable collateral, in the form of money or information that was beneficial to the organisation.

A contact from the organisation had come for the negotiations and should have been talking to the Chief. It was a mystery as to why he looked confused in a place like this.

"We-well, you see..."

Pevin listened to him while opening the door as a vein popped up on his forehead. He removed the object in front of his eyes. That was definitely the Chief ———

Surprisingly while the siren rang,

"Guga ~ Bi ~."

His nose inflated.

“Why are you sleeping in a situation like this?!”

“Hifoh!”

Pevin suddenly yelled close to his ear and the Chief jumped to his feet.

“Uoh ~, what, what? Ah, good morning, Pevin.”

“Good morning. Did you have a nice dream?”

“Pe-pevin... You’re scary...”

Pevin was smiling but something black was gushing out from behind him and the Chief’s face paled.

“I heard about it. You got sleepy during negotiations and fell asleep... Can you still call yourself the Chief of 【Buscador】?”

“Puh ~, it’s because he was so boring, you know?”

“What’re you saying!? I politely explained the current situation to you! I told you how much you should pay for the specimens. Moreover, I presented you with a fairly reasonable price!”

“I told you I was okay with that, yeah? I thought the negotiations were over so I fell asleep, you know?”

“Do not sleep!”

Pevin said, amazed. The white-robed man remained standing by the door, disconnected from this.

“Well, if negotiations were over then I do not mind. I know this is sudden, but I would like the careful Chief to grasp the situation.”

“Mhm? Oh, ah, eh? What’s that sound?”

The Chief finally noticed the sound and began looking around. The white-robed man

was also interested in what was going on and continued listening.

Pevin explained the conversation he'd just had with the researcher to the Chief.

"What will you do, Chief?"

"Well ~... Ah, I've got a good idea! We'll use **that** on them!"

"I thought you would say that. I have already issued the capture order but there is a possibility that the human will die so please be patient."

"If possible, I want them to die while facing **that**."

"Well then, shall we go and see?"

"You get it, yup."

"Ah, what will you do?"

Pevin asked the white-robed man.

"Ah, th-that's right. The contract documents are in the carriage, I'll draw it up and bring it here. It'll take some time so I'd like to go do that. Well, I don't mind if you take time to deal with the foe."

"I understand. We will see you later."

Pevin said. The man grinded his teeth a little and left the room.

"Well then, we should get to work."

GRRRRROOOOOOWWWWL!

.....o

"Ah, I wanna eat sweets."

"This is an emergency, Chief."

Pevin refused the Chief and he puffed out his cheeks.



Winka saw a tragic scene when she entered the complex. Inside of the cages were a ton of monster corpses. It smelt like burnt moxa¹⁾, rotting flesh, and an intense blood smell. How many monsters had lost their lives here? The blood smell clung to the inside of the establishment and Winka scrunched up her face.

There were also a lot of dead fishes floating in a large water tank. Winka was concerned because she'd never seen these dead monsters before.

Whether they were new species or rare species, monsters that shouldn't have wings had them. Monsters who shouldn't have sharp tusks had them and four-legged monsters had an extra two artificial legs.

Winka couldn't understand what this meant but she did understand that these were the corpses of the remodelled monsters that Winger had mentioned. They probably died because of the remodelling. A fire burnt within her as she saw these bodies.

"I'll destroy this place..."

Her thirst for blood gusted out and the air felt as if it was quivering. She felt a presence and glared towards its direction and Winger also growled.

"Hohoh, what a strange customer."

The person who appeared was many times bigger than Winka. He was wearing a white robe but it didn't suit him at all.

"It's surprising that the intruder is a young girl like yourself and that Sky Wolf... Stupidly came back to be experimented on, huh!"

At that moment Winger lunged at the man trying to bite him but a mesh wall appeared in front of the man from the ground up to the ceiling. Winger collided with the wall,

SHOCK SHOCK SHOCK SHOCK SHOOOOOOOCK!

"Woof!"

It looked as if an electric current was flowing through the wall, no, that's wrong, when

Winka looked closer the wall itself seemed to be composed of electricity. Naturally an electrical surprise awaited those who touched it.

“Winger?!”

Winka shouted loudly. Smoke sizzled out of Winger’s body and Winka paled when she saw Winger stretched out on the ground.

“Opps, you better not touch it, yup.”

“...?!”

“You’ll also be shocked if you touch it, yup.”

Winka glared at the wall.

“Kufufu ~, suppose I’ll introduce myself. I am the chief of this 【Buscador Laboratory】. My name’s Nagnala, it is.”

“... Wi is Wi...”

Winka replied thinking that it was only polite to name herself as well.

“Hoh, you’re called Wi, right? Mhm ~ I have a strange feeling I’ve seen you somewhere before, or not...”

Nagnala narrowed his eyes and stared at Winka but she didn’t reply.

“Well whatever.”

At that time Nagnala snapped his fingers, then the floor underneath Winger opened and it fell down into it.

“Winger!”

Winka extended her hands trying to help but the floor instantly closed.

“Guh! ...Give Winger back.”

Winka didn’t yell but her words were mixed with anger and killing intent.

“Oh ~ how scary. But you know, if you try anything funny I’ll kill that Sky Wolf, I will.”

“... I won’t let you.”

“Kufufu ~, then you’ll have to accept my conditions, yup.”

“... Conditions?”

Winka tilted her head. Nagnala was happy and curved his lips.

“That’s right, yup. If you accept my conditions then I won’t do anything to the Sky Wolf, no I won’t.”

“... Really?”

“I promise, I do.”

“What’s are your conditions...?”

“Kufufu ~, it’s simple, yup. I want you to have a death match with a certain creature.”

Winka was guided to a place that was bigger than a gym, it was a space built by hollowing out a big rock. She discovered a large space shaped like a box surrounded by wires. It looked like a cage to keep people who’d entered from escaping.

The sky could be seen on top of the cage. The grid overlapped each other many times and it was impossible to escape but she could see the outside through the gaps.

There were Sky Wolves confined in a cage in the surrounding area and just outside of the box, was Winger covered in a wire mesh. Furthermore Winger occasionally convulsed, the wire mesh probably had an electric current running through it. The purpose of that electricity was to bind Winger’s movements but Wi who saw the increase in voltage, got more and more angry.

Beside the wire mesh was a white-robed man who seemed to be researcher. He had a syringe in his hand. Wi didn’t know what was inside of the syringe but she understood that he was going to inject it into Winger if she opposed them.

She checked her surroundings once again. The entrance was closed and the only exit was behind Winger. From there if she were to snatch the key from the researcher, she might be able to quickly escape. No, she could destroy the door and force her way through.

Winger's family, the Sky Wolves constantly slammed their bodies against the cage. Winka silently did as she was told and entered the box. Pevin opened the lock on the door and Winka entered then the door was immediately locked.

A square cube-like box was placed in front of Winka. It was a huge black object about 10 metres in height.

"Now then, you understand even if I don't explain it to you, right?"

Nagnala said while standing proudly outside of the box.

"There's a certain creature inside of that 《Black Box》. The condition is to win against that creature. If you win, I'll release the fool entangled in the net, I will."

Winka felt offended that he'd called Winger an idiot and glared at him.

"Kufufu ~, keep your enthusiasm for the opponent in front of you, okay?"

Nagnala said arrogantly. Winka's glared didn't seem to have any effect on him.

"Then let's begin, alright?"

A crack appeared on the 《Black Box》. Winka looked at Winger and the Sky Wolves trapped in the cage.

"... I'll save them."

Winka proclaimed and while holding out 《Bone Maiden of Victory》.

CRACCCCK!

The moment when Winka thought the box was going to break, a black thing that looked like tentacles came towards her at a tremendous speed but Winka was calm. She quickly slashed the tentacle with 《Bone Maiden of Victory》.

“Bigyaaaan!”

An ear-splitting sound echoed around them and the appearance of the creature with many tentacles gradually became clear.

“Now go mad to your heart’s content... Black Chimera.”

The Black Chimera extended its many tentacles. Looking closely the tentacles were the creature’s stretched out hair, hair like the ones that grew on people’s heads. Moreover the tentacles were composed of snakes. Of course each snake was alive and as big as an anaconda.

The animals were only a part of the creature. Wi wielded her spear and observed it.

It stood on four legs like a lion and its whole body was black. Like a scorpion, its tail had a pointed stinger. Its face resembled a wolf but only the right half of it, the remaining left half had a large burnt appearance.

Its whole body was black but the four legs were all different from each other in colour, claws, muscle mass and thickness. It was an unnatural appearance unlike any living creature. When she looked at the Black Chimera, Winka became sad.

“It’s crying... You poor thing.”

She could feel a heart-breaking feeling coming the Black Chimera who had roared.

Nagnala looked happy, completely opposite from Winka. He spoke to Pevin who was standing next to him.

“How long will it hold this time, Pevin?”

“If we are lucky about twenty minutes?”

“Kufufu ~, then I’ll enjoy those twenty minutes to the max!”

Nagnala took out some sweets from his pocket and began eating.

“We’re still working, Chief.”

“You’re so cold! That’s why you miss things!”

Nagnala held his half-eaten sweet in front of Pevin but Pevin refused by holding up his hand.

“Oh well, as long as I can get good data.”

“Kufufu ~, it’s been a while since the chimera has debuted so it’ll be fine, yup!”

While they were talking Winka was easily avoiding the many tentacles coming her way.

“... Sorry.”

SLASH SLASH SLASH!

The Black Chimera would shriek in pain when she slashed the tentacles with her spear and Winka distorted her face.

Since she was a gentle girl she couldn’t suppress her emotions when she heard the screams. But if she didn’t win then Winger would be killed. Besides she somehow knew that the creatures in front of her weren’t alive, they were already dead. But she still couldn’t slash the Black Chimera who was screaming sorrowfully.

She sympathised with the Black Chimera who was being manipulated. But her priority was to save Winger so she hardened her heart and kept attacking.

The Black Chimera was enraged at having its tentacles cut off and sprung into the air. It started preparing something. However without delay, Winka fled from the spot and jumped onto the falling Black Chimera’s back.

“Fuh... Hah!”

She put her power into 《Bone Maiden of Victory》 and swung down.

STRRIIIIIIIKE!

“...?!”

Its skin was unexpectedly hard and acted like a shield so the attack didn't hit. It was as if the creature was clad in steel.

Winka didn't know when but the tentacles had revived and flew at her. The tentacles seemed to have an odd regenerating power. Winka was surprised and slashed at the tentacles again before leaving her spot. Pevin nodded in admiration as he watched her fight.

"She's done it. Even though the Black Chimera should have been the equivalent to an S rank monster."

"Kufufu ~, it's simple. It just means that she's that strong, you know?"

"Did you know about this?"

"Yup ~, I've seen her somewhere before... Or not. Anyway, I'm hungry, I am."

"Even though you have been eating sweets up until now"

"Ah, I don't have anymore! Uoh ~ I'm so irritated! It'll also be a problem if this drags on, yup."

"That is true. We can only control the Black Chimera for a set time."

"Well then, it's about time, it is."

Nagnala said as he glanced at his subordinate and nodded. His subordinate also responded with a nod, next to him was Winger.

Winka once again swung 《Bone Maiden of Victory》 and this time she aimed to cut the Black Chimera's body.

"Wa~it a moment, you will!"

Winka glanced at the sudden voice.

"Pay attention to that, okay."

Nagnala said as he pointed somewhere. Winka looked to where he was pointing and

stiffened as if she was at a loss for words. A man was pointing the syringe at Winger and moving his fingers, spurting the liquid out.

“You promised!”

Winka screamed at Nagnala. She was saying that it was different from what he’d promised. He’d told her that he would release them if she won the match. Winka placed her trust in him and fought and yet she didn’t understand why he wanted to hurt Winger so she shouted.

“It’s simple, it is. The experiment is already over, yup.”

“What——.”

STAB!

“...?!”

Winka was focused on Winger and ignored the opponent in front of her. That opponent was the Black Chimera. The needle attached to the tip of its tail was now stuck in Winka’s lower abdomen. Although it was aimed at her heart, she was able to shift her body and avoid instant death. But it didn’t change the fact that she suffered a fatal blow.

“Hohoh, you prevented it from piercing your heart by a hair’s breadth. But...”

Nagnala suggested. Winka was able to somehow support her body with 《Bone Maiden of Victory》 but her whole body was suddenly becoming numb.

“Uoh...!?”

Strength left her body and her legs gave way.

(Why... Can’t I... Move my... Body...?)

Despite asking herself this, she frantically tried to stand up but her grip was also disappearing and she laid on the ground.

“Kufufu ~, it’s impossible, impossible, it is ~. The Black Chimera’s stinger can produce

two types of poisons, it can. One of it is a lethal poison and even if only a little enters one's body, well even an S rank monster would die in seconds."

"Poi... Son...?"

"Gufufu ~, the poison effecting you now is a paralysing poison, it is. The effect is... Well you can feel the effects so you should understand, shouldn't you? Naturally if the paralysing poison penetrated your heart, you would die. You dodged really well, you did."

He nodded his head up and down in admiration.

"Ah, by the way I didn't use the lethal poison at the beginning because only a limited amount can be produced. It's a waste to use it on an enemy of your level. Kufufu ~."

Winka was vexed and tried to hold in her anger. She resented that he was making fun of her and going easy on her but even more so, she hated that she was weak-minded.

Winka was preoccupied with Winger and obviously neglected her opponent which then invited it to attack her. Even though she had to do something to help Winger and his family. Winka frantically tried to lift her face up while thinking so and saw that Winger was being restrained by the net. Winger also opened its eyes slightly and looked at Winka.

Winger's expression looked very apologetic. No, Winger probably regretted having involved Winka in this so lightly. The sun was going down and the sky was changing from blue to an orange sunset. The Black Chimera prepared its final attack and slowly approached Winka.

Winger's family, who were captured in the cage, barked towards the Black Chimera.

"N~oisy, it is."

"Would you like me to give them medicine so they would behave?"

Pevin suggested.

"They're no longer necessary. After all new toys are coming soon, right?"

“Then, what would you like to do?”

“Open the cage.”

Pevin instructed his subordinates when he heard what Nagnala said. The cage door clicked opened and the Sky Wolves who’d heard that, simultaneously got out of the cage.

(You can’t...?!)

Winka tried to stop the Sky Wolves but her voice wouldn’t come out. The Sky Wolves attack the Black Chimera all at once but because of the experiments their bodies were just as weak and thin as they looked, even Winger was like that.

Sky Wolves were originally more robust and that was clearly shown in their appearance. But all the Sky Wolves here didn’t feel intimidating at all. But still they stood in front of Winka to protect her and body slammed into the Black Chimera. They were aware that Winka had come to help them.

They were indebted to her and couldn’t watch silently as Winka was being killed. But the difference in their fighting powers was evident. Regardless of how many times they slammed into the Black Chimera, their weakened bodies just bounced right off.

The Black Chimera only thought of them as a swarm of unproblematic flies. Still even with their tattered wings, the Sky Wolves snarled at the Black Chimera but sadly were unable to damage it at all.

“Black Chimera, kill those flies... Why don’t you?”

The moment it heard those words, the Black Chimera’s eyes shone suspiciously and then several tentacles flew out and caught the Sky Wolves. The Sky Wolves struggled hard against the binds but they gradually tightened.

SNAP SNAP SNAAP!

The Sky Wolves were slowly dying at the hands of the Black Chimera. Winka could only silently watch it happen.

“Stop... It...”

She was paralysed up until her lips and couldn't move very well. But she was still frantically trying to move her body, trying to stop its attack. At this rate they were going to die in vain. Without knowing what Winka was thinking, the Sky Wolves charged towards the monster in front of them without fear.

It was almost as if they were prepared for death. They kept charging at the monster and miserably falling back down until finally only one remained.

“Woooooooooooooof!”

The Sky Wolf growled and although its kin had died, its fighting spirit had not shaken. However the only thing it could do was growl, it could no longer move because its physical strength had already reached its limits.

The tentacles were flying towards it and just like that it'll be crushed to death. No, its body might be crushed by the Black Chimera's big mouth. But the Sky Wolf stood without closing its eyes till the last moment.

When everyone thought it was going to end ———

——— *SLASH!*

Fresh blood splattered from the tentacles.

“That girl, she can still move?!”

“I... I... Won't let... You!”

Winka didn't know why she could move her body but she was glad that she could defend the Sky Wolf by slashing the tentacle.

“This is a surprise, it is. The Black Chimera's paralysis poison should be working properly, it should. The poison can even immobilise mammoth-like monsters, who're 10 metres long, it can.”

“So why can you move?”

“... It is an interesting sample, is it not?”

“Let’s dissect it and see.”

“Yes, let’s finish it off quickly.”

A dangerous conversation was going on but Winka was preoccupied. She certainly could move but she hadn’t recovered. Although she was standing up with sheer willpower, if she relaxed even just a little she’d fall back onto the ground. If that happened, she doubted that she could move again.

“I’ll... Protect them...”

The Sky Wolf looked at her in concern and she weakly smiled and reassured it by saying,

“Wi will... Protect you...”

The Black Chimera’s tentacles were regenerating again.

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

She put all her power into swinging 《Bone Maiden of Victory》 then a vacuum blade appeared and the tentacles were chopped. In the aftermath, cracks appeared on the wire mesh near Winger.

“Ooh?! What power!”

Nagnala admired her power, even with her paralysed body the shockwave of her attack had reached far away. Using all her power, Winka jumped into the air while rotating her body and swung her spear towards the Black Chimera’s body.

SLAAAAAASSSSSSH!

She couldn’t damage it before but this time the Black Chimera took massive damage. A huge section on its back was cut open and a large amount of blood was pouring out indicating that the wound was deep. Winka stood up on the ground, supported herself with her spear and looked at the Black Chimera groaning in pain.



[Hiiro]

“It’s nearly night time.”

Hiiro and co, who were chasing after Winka, finally found a complex that looked like 【Buscador】 around sunset. Hiiro quickly glanced around 【Buscador】 .

(... A carriage?)

He discovered a carriage a little further away. Since it wasn’t strange for a carriage to be at a place like this, he only glanced at it quickly before turning his gaze to the complex and found a broken window. Arnold also noticed the window and pointed at it.

“Okay! Let’s break in through there! Muir, wait here.”

“Eh... Ah...”

Arnold didn’t want Muir to enter such a dangerous complex but Muir looked like she had something to say.

“What’s wrong, Muir?”

“... Can I go with you guys, or is that impossible?”

“You can’t come! I don’t know what dangers are inside!”

“Uoh... But...”

Hiiro looked at Muir who was shaking her head stubbornly. He felt like he could understand why she wanted to come along. It was simple to guess if you knew her personality. She was willing to sacrifice herself in order to protect someone. Hiiro understood this because of what had happened the other day with 《Beast Cage》 .

She had no power, Arnold was always protecting her and defending her from enemy attacks. When they fought Beast Cage Muir had shielded a beastman girl, who she’d just met, from an enemy attack. More recently when they had met Winka, Hiiro noticed

that Muir seemed jealous of her.

Winka wasn't much different to Muir in age and body and yet she lived strongly so Muir was jealous of her. She was also jealous of Winka's strength. That's why she had clearly stated that she wanted to save Winka. She just couldn't leave it alone. Hiroyuki also understood Arnold's feelings since he prioritised Muir's safety.

They had come to Buscador to save Winka because Muir had wished it. But they didn't know what was happening inside of 【Buscador】 so Arnold couldn't let Muir do as she pleased.



However Hiiro couldn't let them keep quarrelling since they would get nowhere.

"Hey, Old Man. Isn't it fine if she tags along?"

"Hah? What're you saying?"

Muir brightened up when Hiiro said that however Arnold snapped at Hiiro.

"Hey Hiiro, even you notice how ominous this place is, right?"

"Yeah."

"This place is really suspicious! My instincts are telling me to get away from here as soon as possible! This place is clearly a very dangerous place!"

"I guess so."

Hiiro knew that from the atmosphere surrounding the complex and what he'd heard from the Sky Wolf (with Winka interpreting). It was some kind of testing site. Moreover since it was being hidden in such a place as this, it wasn't something publicly known.

"That being the case, Muir, it's better if you wait here!"

Muir understood that what Arnold said was sound and was crestfallen. However Hiiro lightly sighed,

"Even so."

"Hah?"

"Old Man, we came all the way here because of her, right?"

"Eh? Yeah..."

"Then how about we see her wishes all the way through to the end?"

"... Hah?"

"Or is it that you plan on raising her by pampering her and only letting her see the

beautiful things in life, Old Man?”

“...”

“Well, that’s fine as well. But I think it’s better to have a large variety of experiences.”

“Hiiro...”

“Even if the Chibi regrets it, it’s up to her. It’s up to you to help her along the way, no matter what she chooses, right?”

The two were attentively listening to Hiiro while in a daze.

“Let her decide her own path. Even if she chooses the wrong path, all she has to do is go back the way she came. If it’s a path where she can’t turn back then I suppose she’ll just have to give up.”

“Give up?!”

“At the very least I wouldn’t want someone else to decide my path for me. If I were to regret something at least it would be something I decided on. If I’m going to regret it anyways, I might as well choose what I’ll regret.”

Arnold stared into Muir’s eyes and she also stared back.

“That way she can grow, so hurry up and decide.”

After the two stared at each other for a while,

“... I understand.”

Arnold gave in and Muir smiled in relief.

“But Muir, don’t leave my side, okay?”

“Ok! I won’t!”

Hiiro sighed when it was finally settled.

“So let’s ——.”

“Wait, Old Man.”

Hihiro stopped Arnold before he could walk and checked the area.

“Wh-what is it! If we don’t hurry up then Winka could be in some serious trouble, right?”

“You can’t complain since you’ve been quarrelling up till now.”

“Uoh... Dammit, as always you’ve got a bad personality...”

“Shut up and follow me.”

The two tilted their heads at Hihiro’s action and reluctantly followed him. While walking Hihiro said to Arnold.

“This time, I’ll take action to return my debt Old Man, so listen up.”

“What?”

“What is it you wish to do, Old Man?”

“... Muir.”

Arnold wanted to hand the request over to Muir. Muir nodded and said.

“Please save Wi-san!”

“Save... It’s vague but for the time being all I have to do is support the Antenna Girl, right?”

“Y-yes!”

“It’s tiresome, but well whatever. Let’s go.”

“Where are we going? The window’s over there, you know?”

Yes, if Hihiro thought the window was an entrance point then he would have went through it. But right now they were taking a detour.

“This facility is probably some kind of testing site. By looking at the complex’s structure and the wire fence surrounding it, you can tell that it was made to keep out intruders.”

“Mhm... Is that so?”

“Facilities like this normally have a mechanism to sense intruders. Originally it would be infrared sensors that react when you touch it. But in this world there are things that are more convenient than that, magic. There’s a high possibility that there’s a barrier around this facility and if you get close enough the guys inside will be alerted to the presence of intruders.”

The two were listening blankly to Hiiro’s explanation. They didn’t think that Hiiro would think that far.

“Why do you know something like that...?”

“I learnt it in a book so my knowledge isn’t perfect. I just guessed that there would be a barrier so it’s better to not get too close to the facility.”

What Hiiro had said was correct but it wasn’t the truth. He’d confirmed that the facility was covered with a barrier by using a character. That character was 『Inspect 視』. Infrared sensors and things similar to it are made visible with this character, 『Inspect 視』.

What he saw was a thin membrane covering the facility and electrical current running through the wire fence, its purpose was to immobilise intruders that touched it. The thin membrane covering the facility was obviously suspicious so he guessed that it was a barrier to sense intruders.

He thought that his guess was probably correct. There was no need to inform the people inside of their presence. So they walked around the facility.

(Okay so the barrier goes up till here.)

The reason they walked around was so he could figure out the size of the barrier. The facility was built so that the rocks covered it and the barrier ended where the rocks were, it did not pass through the rocks. So if they entered through the rocks then they

could get in unnoticed.

“Hey Hihiro, why’re you stopping here?”

“Just shut up and watch.”

Hihiro approached the rock and wrote 『Hole穴』 onto it before activating it.

“Ooooooh!”

Arnold and Muir were surprised when a hole big enough for a person to pass through opened up.

“Let’s go.”

“... Hah, even if I asked him about this he won’t answer, right...?”

“Pr-probably...”

“Argh, it can’t be helped. Right now we have to focus on Wi, let’s go Muir.”

“Yes!”

The two followed after Hihiro. The three people didn’t notice a person staring at them from the carriage...



The white-robed man who went back to the carriage to create the documents for Chief Nagnala, found people acting suspiciously outside of 【Buscador】. He would have normally gone out and talked to the suspicious people but stopped when he saw the appearance of the boy amongst the three.

“... It can’t be...?”

The man quickly pulled out a file from within the carriage, opened it, and confirmed what was inside. It was a list of people who were a nuisance to the organisation and their traits.

“If I’m not mistaken, there was a notification on the communication tool about that person...”

He unrolled several sheets of paper, read what was written on there, and compared it to the group outside of the carriage.

“Glasses, black hair and red robes... A man with a broadsword and a girl wearing a hat... It’s them!”

He was confident that it was them and watched them again. He reached for the communication tool inside of the carriage. At the back of the carriage was a black looking box containing blue and green gems that could fit into one’s hands.

The blue gem was a 《Magic Relay》, a person’s thoughts were sent to a similar magic tool in the form of words by concentrating magic power into the gem. The green gem was a 《Magic Receiver》 and it received messages from the other person. In other words, you could send your thoughts by concentrating magic power into the blue gem and those thoughts would show up as words on the green gem.

However there was a problem with this tool. If you used 《Magic Relay》 then you would have to wait a while before using it again or it’d become unusable. The tool still had room for improvement.

The man put his hand on the 《Magic Relay》 and began concentrating magic power onto it.

“I have to tell that person.”



[Wi]

“Chief, it’s almost time.”

Pevin said to Nagnala who was picking his nose in boredom.

“Eh? Is it time already?”

“Yes, what would you like to do?”

“Mhm ~. Well, we’ve already got the data we need and a new specimen as well.”

Nagnala looked at Winka while laughing cheerfully. He wanted to treat Winka like a specimen.

“There’s just a couple of minutes left.”

“Kufufu ~, let’s watch her until the end.”

They had no doubt that Winka would lose in the end but Winka staggered and supported herself with 《Bone Maiden of Victory》. Her fighting spirit had increased more and more. She managed to land a blow on the Black Chimera but it still wasn’t enough to kill it. If she could not deal a fatal strike, both her and the Sky Wolf would lose their lives.

“Guh... My body is...!?”

Winka desperately tried to move her body but because the paralysis was too strong, her feet weren’t listening to her. The Sky Wolf rested for a while but it was still stumbling around. The Sky Wolf looked at Winger, who was trapped inside of the net and then at Winka.

“Wo~of.”

“... Eh?”

Winka heard something.

『Thank you for coming to save us. Please survive.』

Winka understood the Sky Wolf’s words but she couldn’t understand why it was saying that now and frowned. Then in the next moment the Sky Wolf began running at full speed. It was headed towards Winger. The Sky Wolf rushed towards Winger who was outside of the wire mesh.

“Hahaha, what a stupid monster. This wire mesh is made out of steel and there’s an electric current running through it. It’s being suicidal.”

The white-robed men standing next to Winger laughed like they were making fun of the Sky Wolf.

SNAP...

“... Eh?”

They heard the sound of the iron breaking,

CLAAAAANG!

The wire mesh was torn apart and the Sky Wolf headed towards the white-robed men.

“W-wwwhat?!”

“Es-escape!”

The men ran away from the spot and as they were running away something that looked like a device dropped. That device controlled the electrical current running through Winger’s net.

“Wh-what is the meaning of this, Pevin?!”

“... Perhaps her attack from before reached the wire mesh?”

Yes, it was just as Pevin guessed. Winka’s previous attack had hit the wire mesh and the Sky Wolf’s body had broken it. Earlier the Sky Wolf was looking at the wire mesh more than Winger. It rushed at the wire mesh after confirming that it could break it.

However electrical current was still running through the mesh and of course right now, it was coursing through the Sky Wolf’s body. The Sky Wolf collapsed onto the ground without a sound.

“Gufufu ~ look at that Pevin, look at it! It’s used up all its strength, it has! What a pitiful experiment!”

Winka grinded her teeth and glared at Nagnala.

“It still seems to be alive, Chief?”

Pevin said and Nagnala looked at the Sky Wolf who'd used up all of its strength. Winka also looked over to confirm it.

Blood was flowing from its body. It desperately stood up, trembled, and tried to make its way towards Winger. No electrical current was flowing through the net that was covering Winger thanks to the white-robed man dropping the device. All that needed to be done now was to remove the net.

The Sky Wolf looked for the binding of the net. It found a string fastened to the net and using the last of its energy, bit it with its damaged teeth. Winger moved its body and escaped through the expanding hole.

Winger rubbed its face against the Sky Wolf who'd collapsed and then looked into its eyes. The light in the Sky Wolf's eyes gradually dimmed. After a while the Sky Wolf stopped moving. Winger rubbed its face against it again and,

“WWWOOOOOOOF!”

In place of flowers, Winger roared as a tribute to the departed Sky Wolf.

(What a... Sad Voice...)

Winka could feel Winger's painful feelings inside her heart, and tears naturally flowed out of her eyes. Winger stared at Winka's blue eyes and moved its damaged body towards her.

“Winger... I'm sorry... I couldn't save everyone...”

Winka cried. Winger gently brought its face close to Winka's and licked her tears.



“Uh ~ what's with this touching scene, huh?! It's an unexpected tearjerker...!”

Nagnala started crying while watching the moving scene between Winka and Winger.

“Please use the handkerchief.”

“Thanks.”

Even though they had caused this situation, no one knew why Nagnala was moved to tears.

“Nope ~, they showed me something nice! I was deeply moved to tears, yup! Ah, thanks for the handkerchief.”

Nagnala returned the handkerchief to Pevin and,

“Chief your juices are so wonderful¹⁾.”

“No way! That’s too much! You’ll lose weight from too much shock, you will!”

“That would be impossible, right?”

“*TH~UD!*”

Nagnala stiffen as if he was petrified but Pevin calmly continued talking without showing any emotions on his face.

“More importantly Chief, it is about to happen soon. Let’s leave in a bit.”

“Wh-what... Eh? Is it already time?”

They both turned towards the Black Chimera in the same way and then the Black Chimera abruptly cried.

“Gyyyyyyyyyyyyyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

It began rampaging after shouting. Winger bit down on Winka’s clothes and put her on its back. The Black Chimera didn’t care about the electrical current running through the wire mesh and attacked wildly.

“As I thought, 20 minutes was the limit.”

“Kufufu ~, it’s rampaging, yup it is.”

“A candle burns brightest before it goes out¹⁾. This is exactly like that.”

“Well, that will also end soon. If possible, I would like the specimen to die in perfect condition.”

Of course the specimen was Winka.

“Well we can still examine it even if it is in pieces.”

“That’s right, it is. For the time being, let’s wait for the situation to settle and watch the outcome, yup.”



Winger quickly moved around and parried the Black Chimera’s attack but Winger suddenly started bleeding.

“Winger!”

Winka couldn’t find any wounds that looked like it could be bleeding. There were burn marks from the electrified net on Winger’s body but Winka didn’t think the blood was coming from there. Then she looked at a spot and gasped in surprise. Blood was flowing out from behind Winger’s ears.

It looked like a needle stab wound. Then she remembered that the men were poking Winger with a syringe.

“Winger... Don’t tell me...”

That was it. The mysterious liquid inside of the syringe had already been injected into Winger. That liquid was a deadly poison and its purpose was to destroy cells.

“Winger, that’s enough! Wi will fight! Have a rest!”

Winka paled and screamed but Winger was still moving around the place. Its movements gradually dulled and it was blown away by a wave of the Black Chimera’s tail and Winger rolled on the ground.

Winka was also thrown off Winger’s back and met the Black Chimera’s eyes. Then the poisonous stinger on its tail headed towards Winka. She couldn’t move at all because she was still paralysed. She prepared herself and gritted her teeth.

BUUUUUSHHHU!

The Black Chimera looked like it was frowning because it had pierced something other than its target.

It had pierced ——— Winger.

“... Win... Winger!”

Winka was stunned at the sight in front of her. Winger had protected her and its body was pierced by the poisonous stinger. While spitting blood out of its mouth, Winger ferociously stared at the Black Chimera.

The Black Chimera swung its tail and threw Winger. Winka thrust her spear into the ground and desperately moved her body towards Winger.

A lot of blood was steadily flowing out of Winger’s wound. Moreover the skin around the wound was turning black as if its cells were dying. The Black Chimera had injected lethal poison from its stinger.

Everyone who saw that understood; Winger didn’t have much time left. Winka looked very woeful as she apologised over and over again.

“I couldn’t protect you... I’m sorry... I’m sorry... I’m sorry.”

Winger looked at Winka gently and said.

『I was happy. Thank you.』

Winka held onto Winger’s still warm body and cried. Winger could no longer speak.

“Oh, oh ~, what a sad farewell, it is! Where there is a meeting, there is also a farewell! It is something that is inevitable in this world! It’s quite a good lesson, isn’t it, my little spearwoman. Kufufu ~.”

“It seems like it. Oh, it looks like it is already night time. We should hurry...”

Nagnala looked at Pevin who had stopped speaking half way and tilted his head when he saw that Pevin's face had stiffened.

"Pevin? What's wrong?"

"Ch-chief... Look..."

"What...?!"

Pevin quietly pointed his finger and Nagnala turned towards that direction and was also at a loss for words. Because there was ——— Winka. She was covered in golden hair and had ears and a tail like a beastman.

CHAPTER 3

BEASTIFICATION

[Hiiro]

They finally arrived at 【Buscador】. Hiiro used 《Word Magic》 on the rock that was covering the facility. The character 『Hole 穴』 opened up a hole big enough for people to enter and Hiiro and co broke in. The place that Hiiro's party arrived at was very bizarre and they frowned.

There were remains of monsters piled up inside of a big cage. The corpses had been left alone for a long time and they smelt incredibly rotten. Furthermore there was a Sky Wolf stretched out on something that looked like an operating table, its hands and feet were cut off and there were a number of surgical scars on its body. The stitches on the wounds were also sloppy, it was kept to a minimum so that the Sky Wolf's organs wouldn't leak out.

Muir saw this and covered her mouth with both hands while a look of despair came over her. Even Arnold was at a loss for words and stiffened. Only Hiiro had an acknowledged look on his face as his guess was correct.

(As I thought, it's an experimental facility. They used monsters... Probably to examine its ecology but it's still unpleasant to look at.)

Even Hiiro frowned at how the people in this facility treated the monsters. Hiiro didn't think anything of examining monster ecologies and making use of it in the future since it was something that normally happened in Japan, no, on Earth. What he didn't like was the way they treated the monsters without care.

Monsters were casually left in cages and there were flies gathering and worms appearing. If they had no use for them anymore wasn't it proper to bury the monsters? This place was just like a garbage disposal site, it was a monster garbage dump. Hiiro didn't know why he felt so irritated when he looked at the monsters that were treated like disposable garbage.

“Hey Hiiro, is this...?”

Arnold asked while blocking his nose, at that time they heard a terrible sound coming from somewhere. It sounded like something had struck the ground and the walls were collapsing. After a while they heard the sound of footsteps.

Since there was a door, they opened it slightly and saw the exterior. People in white-robos were quickly running through the passage trying to escape.

(Did something happen...?)

Hiiro wanted some information so when the person at the back reached the door, Hiiro quickly opened it and kidnapped that person.

“W-wwwho are you guys?!”

That person was a man and, of course, he was surprised to see people who weren’t meant to be here. Hiiro forcefully pushed the man against the wall and,

“Shut up, you only have to answer my question.”

“Wh-what...?!”

The moment the man tried to speak, Hiiro pulled out his sword and pierced the wall, grazing the man’s right cheek.

“Decide right now whether you’ll answer my question or not. Nod if you understand.”

The man hastily nodded his head up and down many times.

“Is he really a brat...? If someone told me he was an assassin, I’d probably believe it...”

“Ah... Hahaha...”

Arnold’s face stiffened seeing Hiiro act in a familiar way and whispered to Muir, who was next to him, to see if they had the same opinion. But Muir could do nothing but feign laughter. Hiiro ignored their muttering and asked the man.

“The Antenna Girl should have come here.”

“Antenna Girl?”

“A wolf was also with her.”

“Wolf... Are you possibly talking about the Sky Wolf...?”

The man timidly asked.

“That’s right, she’s a little girl with blonde hair. Where is she?”

“Where...? What are you to her——?”

This time Hiiro ran his sword at the man’s left cheek.

“I won’t say it again, you know? Now be good and answer my questions.”

“... Ye... Yesh...”

The man looked at Hiiro’s cold eyes which were looking down on him and he lost his will to oppose. He told Hiiro what had happened inside of the facility.

The Chief of this place created a creature and made it fight with Winka in order to gather data. He had thought that the experiment would go as predicted but Winka was more resilient than he thought. The Sky Wolf’s counterattack was also unexpected. But something more astonishing happened. Hiiro couldn’t grasp what he’d heard.

“We-well, she is half beastman...”

Arnold and Muir stiffened when they heard what the man had said. Arnold quickly approached the window and looked up at the sky.

“... I see, today’s a full moon...”

Hiiro frowned while listening to Arnold’s profound muttering. Arnold impatiently looked at Hiiro.

“Hiiro, hurry up! We have to stop Wi...!”

Hihiro was doubtful but he could see that Arnold was at his wit's end and decided that he should go right away but before that ———

“Hey, is there an archive in this facility? Where are the research materials stored?”

“Eh, hey Hihiro?”

Arnold questioned Hihiro, who had asked the man something unexpected but Hihiro didn't care and continued his questioning.

“I'll say it once again, if you lie or remain silent, you know what will happen...”

“I-it is in room 5!”

“Hoh, and where is that?”

“Eh, in building A!”

“Where's that?”

“Th-this is building A. Once you go out to the testing grounds between building A and B, it is in the far right corner of building A!”

“Is there no room like that in building B?”

“B-building B is where we develop new drugs and equipment... Sorry!”

The man told Hihiro everything he knew with a stiff face, trying to keep his life. Hihiro chuckled.

“Thanks for the information. Now go to sleep.”

“Eh?”

Hihiro punched the man in the stomach and he lost consciousness.

“Hi-hihiro... You...”

Arnold looked at Hihiro in shock.

“Ah, haha... That is just like Hihiro-san...”

Muir was once again reminded that this was why Hihiro came here and unintentionally sighed. They opened the door and when they confirmed that no one was there, they headed to the place that the man told them about. But to make matters worse they encountered two people.

“Wh-who are you guys!”

“Who’re you?”

Arnold asked and the fat one answered.

“I am the Chief of this facility, Nagnala!”

“My name is Pevin.”

The other person was slender and wore glasses. He looked smart and his most noticeable feature was his slit-eyes. He felt like someone who looked down on people. Arnold raised his eyebrows and spoke.

“I see, so you’re the inhuman researcher!”

Arnold said as he drew his sword. Nagnala was frightened and pulled himself back while,

“Hyah! Pe-pevin, do something! Eh...? Pevin? Pe... Vin?”

Pevin had hid himself behind the wall and only his face was seen.

“Do your best, Chief.”

“Heeeeeeeeeeeey! I can’t fight, I can’t!”

“I won’t let you escape! Hey, ah!”

Arnold mercilessly pummelled Nagnala with the back of his broadsword and he sunk into the wall.

“Fool... Ish... Man...”

Nagnala sunk into the wall and his whole body convulsed.

“Wh-what’s with him...? He’s really weak?”

Arnold was surprised at the lack of resistance.

“Obviously. The Chief is just a research idiot.”

“Hoh, then how about you?!”

“Fuh, see for yourself!”

SLAASH!

Arnold struck his sword in the same way and Pevin sunk into the wall.

“It... Doesn’t mean I am strong... Does it...?”

Pevin suddenly dropped his head. Hiiro and co were dumbfounded but now they could head towards Winka without any disturbances. They left the two idiots and proceeded forward.

The scene in front of them when they opened the door was breath-taking. There was a large amount of blood spattered around the place and something that looked like monster flesh was scattered everywhere.

The wire mesh was broken and there were several crates on the ground inside of it. Perhaps this was the testing site that the threatened researcher had mentioned earlier but it was incredibly worn-out.

There was a door on the other side of the testing site which Hiiro judged to be building B.

Hiiro was surprised that they created a testing site like this but the most astonishing sight was at the centre of the room. There was a pool of blood and someone stood there, alone.

There was blood dripping from that person’s mouth. It looked like a scene from a

horror movie. The three stood still and didn't say a word because the person who was standing there was Winka; the person Hiiro and co were searching for. However her appearance had completely changed and for a moment, they didn't recognise her.

The long spear that she had when they met her 《Bone Maiden of Victory》 was next to her and she was wearing the same clothes.

Her braided long blonde hair was now untied and looked as if it twined itself around her body. It looked like body hair and it also like tattoos. Animal ears had sprung up on her head and she had grown a tail. Moreover she had three tails instead of one. Her hair was purely blonde but now it was shining gold for some reason.

“... Three tails...? Wi... What the hell...? Don't tell me... No, that can't be...”

Arnold stared at her while muttering something. Hiiro asked what was on his mind.

“He-hey Old Man, is that really the Antenna Girl...?”

He was somewhat convinced that it was Winka, judging from the current situation but he asked anyway.

“Eh? Ah, yeah. You probably don't know this Hiiro, during the full moon the beastman's power gets stronger in half-breeds, who have beastman blood.”

Hiiro looked up at the sky and clearly saw the full moon.

“Today is the full moon... Do you get stronger?”

“Yeah, even for ordinary beastman, our blood boils when there's a full moon and we have more power than usual.”

Hiiro was convinced that this was the first time he'd ever heard this.

“Beastman half-breeds aren't accustomed to the power of the beastman so on nights with a full moon, they calm their minds and controls the beast within. Young children often rampage.”

“Like she's doing right now?”

“Yes, that control gets stronger the older you get. After the age of 10, even on nights with a full moon it should end with them growing animal ears and tail.”

“Then why did she become like that?”

Winka said she was 14 years old despite looking like she was 10.

“That’s probably...”

Hihiro looked at where Arnold was looking and there was the Sky Wolf. Just by looking at it, Hihiro could tell that it had died.

“I see, if she saw something like that then no wonder she can’t calm her mind.”

“Yeah, it was probably killed right in front of her eyes. There are also others that have died. Wi’s gentle so this would certainly make her lose her composure. Then she 《Beastified》.”

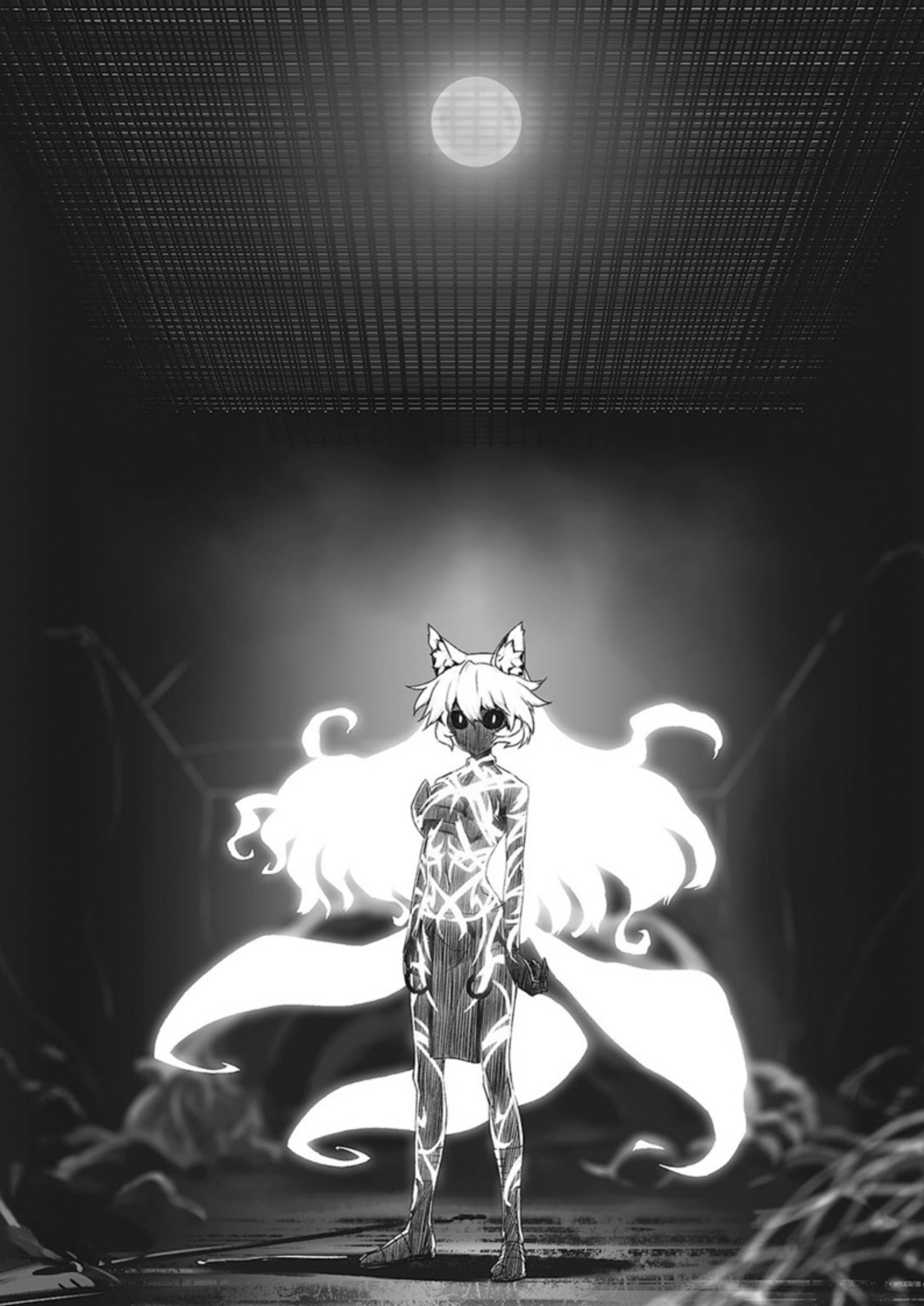
“《Beasified》?”

“The awakening of the beast within is called 《Beasification》. There are half-breeds out there who have mastered 《Beastification》 and can use it freely.”

“Is that what happens when you fail?”

Winka was still slicing up the corpse of the monsters. She looked like a real beast.

“That’s a full rampage. Wi’s probably lost consciousness.”



“Wi-saaaaaan! We have come to help you!”

“Idiot, stop that Muir!”

Winka stopped moving when she heard Muir’s voice and quietly looked at them. Hiiro realised that she couldn’t recognise them when he saw her eyes.

(Black... Eyes?)

Yes, just like Hiiro had seen, her eyes were black. The whites of her eyes were completely black and her iris was red. Moreover the red part was small and it made him feel dreadful. No matter how he looked at it, she was no longer conscious.

Her killing intent instantly exploded. She licked the blood on her hand, suddenly kicked off the ground and quickly ran towards Muir.

Muir couldn’t move, the speed at which Winka was running towards her was too fast. Arnold stood in front of her and took a defensive posture with his broadsword.

CLASH!

Winka stuck with the palm of her right hand which had grown sharp claws. Hiiro thought that Arnold would be able to withstand the attack using his strength but he was wrong.

“Raaaaaaaawwwr!”

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Arnold was blown away along with Muir, who was behind him.

(Hey, hey, that’s a lot of power!)

Arnold was a beastman so he was also strong. Despite defending with all his might, he was blown away. Since he defended with a sword he didn’t receive direct damage. The two tumbled on the ground and light scratches appeared on their body.

“Grrrrrrrrrrrrr...”

Winka growled like a real beast and crawled on all fours. She glared at Arnold and

Muir and moved around like she was hunting. At this rate Arnold would be in trouble so Hiiro thought about how to turn her back to her normal self.

At that time, however, Hiiro entered Winka's view. Just when he had thought that she finally stopped moving, she jumped towards him. She intended to attack from above.

"Don't underestimate me!"

Hiiro predicted where she would land and leaped backward. He waited for the right time and accumulated his power before kicking off the ground. He kicked the falling Winka but,

GRAB!

She easily caught the blow with one hand.

"What?!"

Hiiro obviously didn't have strength like a beastman but he thought that she would receive damage if he kicked with all his might, but he was wrong. Hiiro's kick was weak enough that Winka, in her current state, could easily stop it with one hand. Winka held onto Hiiro's ankle and swung him around like a swing.

"Grrrrrrrrrr!"

She roared. She suddenly let go off his ankle and he headed straight towards the wall. If he hit the wall with that much force he would receive a lot of damage. Luckily he was close to the ground so he pulled out his katana 《Piercer》 and thrust it at the ground.

CLLLAAAAANK!

He didn't seem to be stopping but nevertheless he'd slowed down a bit. However his grip had loosen from hitting the ground and he let go of his katana. He fell to the ground 5 metres from the wall and avoided the worst case scenario which would have been dying upon impact with the wall.

Hiiro quickly stood up and thought about how twisted it was that Winka was laughing as if she was having fun.

(... This is a difficult job.)

He had received a request to save Winka from Arnold, no rather, from Muir. It wasn't a difficult request and he had thought he could cut his way through using 《Word Magic》. But he never expected that he would be fighting Winka, herself and not the people from the facility.

Furthermore she was incredibly strong. She was the daughter of a beastman so she was blessed with high physical abilities. Hiirou never thought that there would be such an overwhelming difference in strength between them.

He thought about confirming her 《Status》 now that he was far away from her. He used 『Peek 司見』. He was struck with terror when he read what had appeared in front of him.



Nagnala, the Chief of 【Buscador】 had been embedded in the wall like a mural by Arnold. His subordinate, Pevin also remained buried in the wall.

“... Ah, I remember it now, I do!”

“What do you remember, Chief?”

“About that Chibi Spearwoman! I thought that I'd seen her somewhere before and it turns out that I have, yup!”

“Do you know each other?”

“No! A village I dropped by a while ago was bothered by a terribly ferocious monster, it was.”

The two looked strange since they were stuck in the wall and only their mouth were moving.

“The person that appeared there by chance was that Chibi Spearwoman. When she heard what the villagers had to say, she went off somewhere.”

“And then what happened?”

“The next day, that girl dragged the ferocious monster back to the village.”

In other words Winka saved the village.

“Hah, what a good-natured person.”

“It’s not only that! The monster was an Elephant Kong, over 5 metres tall, it was!”

“Eh?! If I am not mistaken, Elephant Kong’s are rank A monsters, right?”

“Yup. Moreover there were two of them...”

Pevin gulped. Challenging a rank C monster alone required one to be level 30 or over. Rank A monsters required an even higher level. Furthermore when there were two rank A monsters, fighting experience was just as important as level.

“I was surprised, I was. I didn’t think that a little girl around the age of 10 would be able to defeat a rank A monster, let alone two of them. Moreover...”

“Th-there is still more?”

“On the same day she finished eating both of them herself, she did...”

“... Hah?”

“I couldn’t believe it, nope... Where does she fit all that meat in that scrawny body of hers...? Wow ~, I really want to dissect the Chibi Spearwoman’s body, I do ~.”

Pevin lightly sighed at Nagnala’s never-ending curiosity.

“We-well leaving her appetite aside. If she is that strong then she must be famous, is she not?”

“Yup, her name was certainly...”



[Hiiro]

“Winka Jio...”

Peeking at Wi’s 《Status》 was enough to make Hiiro’s cheeks cramp.

Winka Jio Lv 77	(Beastification Benefit 30%UP)
HP: 2543/2750 EXP: 588976	MP: 458/721 NEXT: 19707
ATK: 788 (1024) AGI: 900 (1170) INT: 220 (286)	DEF: 674 (876) HIT: 511 (664)
<p>《Technique》</p> <p>The First Stage – Tempest</p> <p>The Second Stage – Vortex</p> <p>The Third Stage – Big Wheel</p> <p>The Fourth Stage – Flash</p> <p>The Fifth Stage – Gathering of Flames</p> <p>《Titles》</p> <p>Natural Gift • Half-breed • Strong Idiot • Familial Affection • Taboo • Animal Lover • Straightforward Girl • Gluttony • Slayer • Unique Killer • My Pace • Monster Killer • Wanderer • Lightning Fast • Master • Combat Lover • Moonlight</p>	

Hiiro was frightened when he saw the numerical values of her physical ability, which were not normal. He understood why Arnold couldn’t defend against her attack even though he was also a beastman. This much difference in their status would cause Arnold to receive damage even if he defended himself.

(Furthermore in my case, if I was to flat-out receive one of her hits...)

Perhaps that power difference would cause someone to leave immediately.

The other day Hiiro had fought Folsé, the commander of 《Beast Cage》, who was also a powerful person. He was human so even if there was a level difference, it didn't count for much.

Winka had beastman blood, a race that was far superior in strength. Moreover there was a big level difference. Even though he had better physical ability than normal humans thanks to the benefits of being from a different world, the difference still made him want to scream.

Anyway Hiiro judged that they should stop attacking her directly. He thought he had undertaken a troublesome job and he started sweating. Winka had no idea what Hiiro was thinking and gradually drew closer to him. Hiiro picked up the katana off the floor and got ready.

“... Anyway, should I try it?”

Hiiro muttered and concentrated magic power onto his fingertips. A bluish-white light lit up and followed his finger. The letter he wrote was 『Bind縛』. First he wanted to stop her movements. Clearly the current Hiiro couldn't watch Winka if she moved around at full power.

(Please hit her!)

Hiiro thought as he shot the letter at Winka like a gun. At this rate it would fly straight towards her. Perhaps with this she wouldn't avoid it and stop moving.

—— Hiiro's thinking was overly optimistic. Winka had outstanding wild instinct and something was flying at her, there was no way that she would stand there and take it. She lightly turned her body and avoided the character.

“Guh! Cancel!”

Hiiro immediately cancelled the character. He could cancel it anytime he wanted as long as he didn't activate it. Once written, his magic power would definitely be

consumed. Since the character could only fly in a straight line, if it was avoided, Hiro would have to draw another so it was a risky move.

He was restricted from consecutively writing the same letter but that restriction had been lifted thanks to 《Multiple Chain Release》.

When Hihiro tried to write the same letter again, Winka rushed at him while extending her right arm.

(This is bad!)

Hihiro jumped to the slide

IMPAAACT!

He had hit the rock that was behind Hihiro. When Hihiro saw the appearance of the rock cliff he was shocked. A big hole had opened as if it had been taken away.

(Hey, hey. I can't take something like that!)

He shivered, thinking about what would happen if he had taken that hit. He could predict and avoid her attacks because she attacked in a straightforward manner. But he couldn't respond if she started to mix her attacks and used feints.

He needed to neutralise her as soon as possible. At this rate she would annihilate them all by herself.

"Hey Old Man! Are you alive?!"

Hihiro was looking at Winka but called out to Arnold. To be honest it was hard for him to face her all by himself. No matter how almighty his cheat magic was, it wasn't the strongest.

His magic had various restrictions and he was a human being. It was really bad for him to have a one-on-one battle with someone who had a big level difference. That's why he needed someone to cooperate with him. Even though Arnold was muttering, "ouch", he still raised his upper body and turned towards Hihiro.

"Listen up Old Man, we'll stop her together!"

“Puh ~, this is tough.”

Arnold also recognised Winka’s strength and sighed.

“I didn’t think that Wi would be this strong. I should also have more strength than usual from 《Beastification》.”

Yes, on the night of a full moon the strength of beastmians increase. Arnold was no exception. Even so Winka easily overpowered him so it was shocking.

“You know, no matter how much a normal half-breed rampages they don’t get that strong. What is going on? Seriously...”

Hihiro thought from the bottom of his heart about how she could really be level 77 with her small body. As he’d thought, level was an important factor in this world.

“But Hihiro we’re up against Wi. You can’t kill her, ok?”

“You may say that but I hope that we don’t get killed.”

The two prepared their weapons for defence. Winka looked at the two and smiled again like she was having fun and then instantly disappeared from the spot.

“... Eh?”

Hihiro was dumbfounded and suddenly felt the wind against his cheeks. He moved his eyes to the right to check what it was. There he saw Arnold attempting to defend against Winka’s attack with his sword.

(I-isn’t that too fast?!)

Hihiro admired how well Arnold was able to react. As a matter of fact Arnold might have been able to see where she had disappeared to. It was also high probable that he was able to defend on instinct. It wasn’t surprising that Arnold was blown away from the attack. But this was convenient for Hihiro. Her opponent was now Arnold so it was easy for Hihiro to aim at her when she stopped moving.

“Don’t let her go, Old Man!”

“Eh? Ah, what’re you planning to do?!”

Hiiro tried to stop Winka by writing 『Stop 止』 and immediately fired it. Just when it was about to touch her,

“Gah... Hey!”

Hiiro was dumbfounded. The character had hit Arnold’s broadsword. Winka had sensed his presence and quickly dodged.

“Mhm ~! Hey what’d you do, Hiiro?! My sword! I can’t move my swwooooooord!”

Arnold tried to desperately move his sword, which was frozen in mid-air, but it was unyielding.

“Sorry, just wait for a minute.”

“Wwhhaattt?!”

“What’d you do?!” Arnold whined. If Hiiro could have cancelled it, he would but once activated the effects remained until time ran out.

(She avoided it at point-blank... Her intuition is too good.)

Winka remained at a fixed distance from Hiiro and Arnold and cautiously circled them. But thanks to that, time passed and Arnold’s sword returned to normal.

“Fuh ~, I’m so glad ~, it’s back to normal. Anyway don’t you have something you wanna say to me, Hiiro?!”

“Don’t worry. Things can be restored even if my magic hits it....”

Hiiro stopped in the middle of his sentence so Arnold asked, concerned.

“He-hey, what’s wrong?”

But Hiiro didn’t answer.

(... Return to normal...? She’s not her normal self, right now. She’s strange. So...)

Hihiro smiled as if he was convinced.

“Hey Old Man. There’s a way to change her back to normal.”

“Eh? Really?”

“Yeah, but I have to hit her with this character.”

Hihiro write 『Origin 元』 and showed it to Arnold.

“Wo-would that really return Wi back to normal?”

“If it directly hits her then sure. I’ve got the image down perfectly.”

Yes, to Hihiro, her original image was that of an expressionless girl.

“But there’s a problem.”

“Wh-what problem?”

“I’m sure you saw earlier, I’ve tried several times to hit her with characters. But she keeps dodging.”

“Ri-right...”

Arnold nodded, remembering what had happened before.

“That’s why I’m going to be focusing solely on hitting her with this character. Even if it’s just for a bit, stop her from moving.”

“...”

Arnold looked troubled. Hihiro understood how he felt. She was messing about until now. It was too difficult to stop her movements.

“Wi’s strength is currently outrageous. You’re saying you can stop her? To be honest this feels impossible with common sense...”

“Hmph, I’ll distort that common sense with my magic.”

Arnold opened his eyes wide at Hihiro's confidence but instantly stiffened.

"... Will that really turn Wi back to normal?"

"Yeah."

"Got it."

Arnold said fortifying his resolve then he clenched his teeth.



[Arnold]

When Arnold grabbed the handle of his sword and prepared himself, a voice called out from behind him.

"Uncle..."

It was Muir. She was also blown away early and was injured in various places.

"Don't come here, Muir. Go back."

"Listen Uncle!"

"... What is it, Muir?"

Muir looked very serious so Arnold couldn't refuse her. Muir gulped,

"L-let me help too, Uncle!"

Her eyes didn't waver but of course Arnold couldn't allow her to help.

"You can't, Muir. Wi's not sane right now and she's stronger than any of us. No matter how much you ask, you can't."

Muir kept staring at Arnold. Hihiro silently watched her.

"... I know I'm weak. But I still want to do something for Wi-san."

“It’s not that I can’t understand how you feel. You’re a kind girl, but right now you’ll just get in the way, right...?”

Arnold didn’t want to say the last sentence. However even though Muir had heard what he’d said, her resolution didn’t change.

“Yeah, I know that. But Wi-san... Is crying.”

“... Hah?”

“Wi-san... Has been crying this whole time.”

“Muir... You...”

Muir stared at her sadly. Arnold looked at Muir, shocked.

“I can tell... It’s coming through to me.”

She brought both hands to her chest.

“Wi-san is very sad... Pain... And guilt... She’s crying...”

Arnold silently listened to Muir.

(Muir is a really sensitive girl and she’s also the only survivor of that family... She can hear Wi’s inner voice, huh...)

He thought as he remembered the time when he decided to raise Muir as his daughter. She was a timid girl who couldn’t speak up for herself. She was gradually changing on this trip.

Yes, she’d grown, her body as well as her heart. It wasn’t something that Arnold should be thinking about at this time but Arnold was glad that he’d set out on an adventure with the girl. He’d never imagined that she would grow this much and was very happy.

(No, she’s his daughter. This kind of growth might have been inevitable.)

Arnold gently smiled and softly put his hand on top of Muir’s head.

“... I got it. If that’s what you say then I won’t stop you.”

“Uncle!”

Muir smiled happily.

“But we’re currently in combat. There’s nothing you can do.”

Muir stared at Arnold. Arnold really believed in her so she answered with her best smile.

“Okay!”

“Okay!”

The two settled the problem somehow and Hihiro finally entered the conversation.

“I feel bad for interrupting your harmonious mood, but Antenna Girl is growing impatient, you know?”

“Al-alright!”

“Ah, ahhh!”

The two were pulled back into reality by Hihiro’s words and once again faced the girl who possessed great violence.



“Oh yeah! If I recall correctly, her name’s Whiskey Gin or something.”

Nagnala recalled to Pevin, Winka’s name as they both remained stuck in the wall.

“Wh-what is it!?”

“... Is that really her name? Isn’t that the name of alcohol brands?”

“Yeah... Th-that’s right! If my memory is correct, her name is definitely Whiskey, it is!”

“How suspicious. How very suspicious. Chief, you haven’t shown any interest in her so you have either forgotten her name or remembered it incorrectly.”

“Th-that’s too much! I’ve already decided, I have! I’m definitely going to turn you into something sweet, Pevin, I will! I’ll also mash you in a mixer and turn you into a paste before freezing it, then I’ll sell it to children at a reasonable price, I will!”

“It is harsh for you to thrust out a mixture of bizarre and upright ideas, Chief.”

The sound of footsteps could be heard coming towards the two during their conversation and stopped as it reached them.

“Mhm... What on earth is going on here?”

A man wearing a white robe appeared. He had finished negotiating with Nagnala a while ago, headed back to the carriage to draw up the documents and had waited outside.

He saw Hihiro and co entering **【Buscador】** and sent that information off to a certain place. Since he didn’t have anything else to report, he re-entered the building.

But what he saw was Nagnala and Pevin embedded in the wall. They had bewildered expressions on their faces and it seemed like they didn’t have a good grasp of their situation.

“Oh! That voice... Who is it?”

Although Nagnala had said so cheerfully, the man was twitching his cheeks.

“It’s the Liaison from the Organisation, Chief.”

“Mhm... Oh! That guy was also here, he was!”

“Is it not as I said? You do not remember the names of the things you are not interested in or you remember them incorrectly.”

... AHEM.

Nagnala heard someone clear their throat and then carried on with their conversation as if the previous one never happened.

“And? What are you doing in such a place? It can’t be that this is your hobby, right?”

“It’s not, nope! I want you to get me out of here, I do!”

The white-robed man reluctantly sighed and teared the two from the wall.

“Ah ~, I’m saved ~.”

“Yes, I do not want to stay stuck in the wall any longer.”

“By the way, why are you here?”

When the white-robed man asked, Nagnala’s face suddenly turned red as he remembered what happened.

“That’s right! It’s all their fault, it is!”

“Their? They entered the facility after all?”

“They did! Huh...? Did you know?”

“Yes, they were loitering around outside. I want to confirm but what were their characteristics?”

Nagnala described Winka and the other three that suddenly appeared. Having heard Winka’s description the man began to wonder.

“That girl... Where have I...”

“Do you know her?”

“No... You said she suddenly beastified?”

“Yes. Although she was weakened by the paralysis poison, she moved around as if she had recovered and easily killed the Black Chimera that we had made. It was a tremendous sight.”

Pevin said and the man looked pensive,

“... Now that I think of it, it’s a full moon today... It can’t be.”

The man raised his face up and checked the file in his left hand that he’d brought with

him from the carriage. He started flipping through the pages then stopped and stared at a piece of paper.

“A girl with blonde hair wielding a long spear and wearing a breastplate and shorts.”

He said as he confirmed their description and then opened his eyes wide.

“... Chief Nagnala.”

“What is it?”

“You’ve invited some troublesome people.”

Of course Nagnala didn’t understand the meaning of those words and stared blankly at the man. The man shrugged his shoulders as if he was shocked and said.

“The thing you invited in isn’t a small rat but a fierce tiger.”

“Wh-what do you mean?”

“If it’s the person written on this paper then she’s known as Winka of the 《Moonlight》.”

Nagnala didn’t change his expression as he looked at the man holding the fluttering paper. He didn’t get it.

“This girl is our target but at the same time, she’s also our greatest enemy.”

“Your enemy? Is she that strong?”

“Yes, she took down a number of my brethren. But it could just have been luck.”

“What do you mean?”

“I have urgent business to attend to. Excuse me.”

“Eh?”

The white-robed man ignored what Nagnala had said and quickly left.

“He is a hard worker, is he not?”

“Whatever.”

“Well in the human world it is hard to make a career in the organisation that he is registered at. He must be desperate, right?”

“It’s sweltering, it is. I don’t understand what’s so good about that organisation, I don’t. It was 《Breast Rage》, wasn’t it?”

“... It is 《Beast Cage》, Chief.”

“... Gah ~.”

Nagnala pretended that didn’t happen and Pevin shrugged his shoulders,

“As I thought you do not remember it, did you?”

“Yo-you’re wrong, you are! I wanted to see if you remember it, Pevin ~!”

Nagnala lied and Pevin sighed as if he didn’t believe it at all.

“Is that so...? By the way, what shall we do now, Chief?”

“Mhm ~, I don’t want to get caught up in it so let’s escape, yup ~. But I want them to have a taste of how fearful I can be, I do!”

“Then shall we join in?”

“Kufufu ~, I’ll show them!”

Nagnala’s eyes silently shone.



[Arnold]

“Haahaahaahaah... Ar-argh...”

Although Arnold had been defending against Winka’s attack with all his might.

(It's like she's just playing around...)

Yes, Winka attacked many times at a rate that Arnold was barely able to respond to. She was laughing happily while testing if he could keep up his defence. It was as if a child was playing with a toy. Arnold was still frantic.

(I even got Hihiro to use his magic on me.)

Arnold had asked Hihiro to write 『Speed速』 on his arm before his fight with Winka. Hihiro's magic covered his entire body and he felt as light as a feather making it possible for him to move faster than usual.

Arnold had thought that it was unfair that Hihiro could do something like this.

But Winka was still playing around with him. Hihiro had said that it was only effective for one minute.

(Wi is really amazing...)

If she put just a little bit more power into her attacks then they would become very high class attacks. Even when going easy on someone, if she were to land a single blow on her opponent they would be knocked out or killed.

Arnold glanced at Hihiro who gave Arnold a look that said, "Stop Winka".

Arnold wanted to say, "Well why don't you do it then?" but as long as he entrusted Hihiro with the final blow, there was nothing he could do. He had to persevere and complete his part.

"Wi-san! Please wake up!"

Muir had continued talking to Winka for a while now from behind Arnold.

Although she had raised her voice, Winka wasn't interested and only stared at Arnold while ignoring Muir.

It was convenient for Arnold that she didn't show any interest in Muir because then he could focus solely on stopping her. But he had yet to find a way to stop her.

(What can I do...? How do I stop Wi's movements...?)

But before he could think of an idea she playfully struck him again. He guarded with his sword and was pushed back.

"Guh... Haahaahaahaa... Dammit... At this rate I'll run out of strength."

No matter how many times he defended, the impact of the attack passed through the sword and onto his body. With each hit the massive damage of Wi's strikes began to wear Arnold down. Arnold's sweat fell to the ground and he breathed heavily.

(... Mhm? Ground? Sand...?)

Arnold thought of something and took a deep breath.

(Alright! I don't know if it'll work but I'll try it!)

The hair standing up like an antenna on Winka's head started swinging when she felt the atmosphere around Arnold change. Winka's trademark was still going strong even if she was beastified.

Arnold held his sword in both hands and concentrated on it then wind started gathering around him and enveloped the sword.

Arnold's broadsword gradually grew larger as it was surrounded by wind. The wind only covered the sword once but it grew enormous. The wind that had enveloped the sword vibrated and looked like a blur.



[Hiiro]

(Is it vibrating at high speeds...? Or is the wind just moving at a high speed?)

Hiiro checked but he couldn't figure out the principle behind it however he felt that Arnold's attack and defence had increased.

Arnold shot a tense look at Winka and moved his sword to provoke her.

(What are you trying to do, Old Man? The minute's already passed, you know?)

Yes, the character 『Speed速』 which had covered Arnold's body in a bluish-white magic power had already vanished.

Hihiro understood what Arnold was trying to do but when he looked at Arnold's cornered expression it seemed that this move would make or break it. Arnold was putting everything into this one attack.

If this attack failed then it would create a gap between them and if attacked during this time they would be forced to withdraw.

Hihiro looked at Arnold and gulped. Winka responded to being provoked by smiling and rushing straight towards Arnold.

As she ran every step caused the ground to explode so they could see that she was moving at a tremendous speed.

Arnold opened his eyes wide and swung his broadsword down —— but the attack wasn't aimed at Winka.

KER-THUMMMP!

Arnold had hit his sword on the ground. Furthermore it was just near his feet. There was the sound of the impact and a cloud of dust. The dust floated around the area.

Winka was surprised by Arnold's actions and stopped. The pieces of dirt and sand floating about clouded her vision. As Winka moved her hands to clear the smoke, she looked around restlessly to find Arnold but because of the dust she couldn't find him.

Hihiro, however, could see everything because he was watching from far away. Why did Arnold release the attack at his feet? It was to steal away her vision, stop her feet, and restrict her movements. One more thing, the blast caused by that attack ———

"I got it!"

Arnold jumped up and intended to get the better of her from above. Needless to say he wasn't completely unharmed. The explosion had caused fragments of the ground to fly around everywhere which caused small injuries on his body. However he'd

thought that he had gotten into Winka's blind spot.

If Arnold himself attacked her and made her falter then gripped her neck with his hands then Hihiro could do something about her.

Then as Arnold had expected, she was unguarded so he swung down from the sky and gripped his hands towards her neck. He'd thought it would be best to make her unconscious and even if he couldn't then he would restrict her movements.

But ——— it was far from what Arnold had anticipated.

“Wah?!”

His grip was definitely headed towards her neck but his movements were stopped just before he'd reached it. Her sparkling golden tail had stopped him.

Her three tails suddenly grew and protected her from Arnold's attack. Those actions were so unbelievable that Hihiro and Muir were at a loss for words. Hihiro and Muir thought that Arnold's strike would hit her. Hihiro was prepared to release his 《Word Magic》 at any time but Arnold's attack had failed.

Winka moved a tail and wrapped it around Arnold, who was standing behind her.

“Guh... Hah?!”

The constricting force gradually became stronger and when Hihiro thought she was going to smile,

CREAK CREAK CREAK...

She put power into her right fist. Hihiro and Muir who saw that, screamed.

“This is bad?!”

“Uncle?!”

Hiiro immediately started moving and threw his katana at Winka. She didn't turn around and repelled the flying katana with her tail.

"Che, you have the leeway, Antenna Girl! But how about this!"

Because there was a little bit of time before she attacked Arnold, Hiiro was able to get close to her and tried to grip her neck. But instead he gripped air. Winka instantly moved behind Hiiro while holding Arnold with her tail. She then wrapped her remaining tail around Hiiro's neck.



[Muir]

"Gu... Guh...!"

"Hiiro-san!"

Muir screamed Hiiro's name but he couldn't breathe because his neck was being squeeze with unbelievable power. His face paled.

He was trying to escape by writing a character but Winka's tail was too powerful and he had his hands full trying to free himself. If he loosen his grip just a little then he would be strangled and lose consciousness.

Arnold was also suffering and trying to escape from the tail's grip. Muir shivered as she stared at the laughing Winka.

"No... You can't, Wi-san! Hiiro-san and Uncle are not your enemies!"

Winka's ears twitched and she stopped laughing.

"... Hi... Ro...?"

At that moment Muir saw something flicker in Winka's eyes.

"Eh...? W-Wi-san...?"

Muir thought that Winka's consciousness had returned.

“Th-that’s right! That person is Hiiro-san!”

“Uoh...”

Winka frowned as if she had a headache and as if to shake off the pain, she swung the tail holding Hiiro and flung him away.

“Arggggggggh!”

“Hiiro-san!”

Hiiro coughed after being flung away; he was free of the strangulation but still could be seriously injured. Muir was relieved to see that he was alright. She gasped and turned back towards Winka, who’d put more power into her tail as she continued tormenting Arnold.

Winka clenched her right fist with so much power that it made a cracking sound. If Arnold was to receive an attack, he would ———

“Run away! Unccccclee!”

But it was pointless. Winka swung her tail and slammed Arnold into the ground. She followed up with her fist, swinging it downward with all her might.

“Ooaaaf?!”

A huge crack had appeared on the ground where Arnold’s body was.

At that moment Muir had a premonition of Arnold’s death. He had received the worst blow while he was completely defenceless. Although they were both beastmans there was a difference in their power.

The blow looked like it had hit his stomach and he wasn’t able to defend himself. Muir felt as if she heard the sounds of bones cracking.

It wasn’t weird for bones to crack after receiving such a tremendous blow. For a second Muir thought that Winka’s blow would have punched through Arnold’s bones. It was that kind of a blow. That’s why she had that premonition.

“N-no... No way... Uncle... Unnncclee!”

Muir rushed towards Arnold. She heard Hiiro shouting, “That idiot!” but she ignored it. Muir approached Arnold while crying.

THWACK

“Kyaaah!?”

Winka’s tail had struck Muir’s cheeks, knocking off her hat, and exposing her animal ears.

“Waaaah...”

Muir tumbled on the ground and stood up, paying no mind to the pain. She went to confirm Arnold’s state. Blood was spilling from his mouth, his face was pale and the whites of his eyes were discoloured.

His shoulders were barely moving so he hadn’t lost his life but his breathing was faint. He would definitely die if he was left like that.

(Uncle... Will die?)

Muir’s fear overruled her sorrow. If Arnold died she would be alone. She didn’t believe that a small existence such as her could live in this world alone.

(No! It’s not like that! It’s not like... I’m alone! I just... Want to live with Uncle!”

Muir still hadn’t done anything for Arnold, who was always protecting her. She decided that she would get stronger and repay the favour back. Nevertheless... She thought that Winka, who was trying to deprive her of that opportunity, was hateful. By no means was Winka entirely at fault but still she had caused this situation.

That’s why Muir couldn’t forgive her and glared at her.

However Muir was dumbfounded. Because ——

SLIDE...

Tears were flowing out of Winka’s eyes. Then Muir remembered that when she had

called Hihiro's name something appeared in Winka's eyes. As she had thought, they were tears. Winka's consciousness had not yet completely disappeared.

"Wi-san..."

Yes, she didn't desire for such a thing to happen again. Muir had only known her for a short while but she knew that Winka was a kind person.

(That's right... The one who's hurting the most is Wi-san... Get it together, Muir! Don't mistake her as the person you're supposed to hate!)

The people she should truly hate were the ones who had built this facility and drove Winka mad.

Muir closed her mouth in a straight line, got up slowly and looked at Winka. But her eyes weren't enveloped in hatred like before. Her eyes were now shining full of hope. She slowly moved towards Winka, step by step, ascertaining her way.

But of course it wasn't Winka but her tail that moved and whipped Muir. Muir tumbled to the ground with a thud but desperately stood up and headed towards Winka again.

Even though she was whipped over and over again, Muir pressed forward, her determination unwavering. Winka felt ominous and slowly backed away.

"You're sad, aren't you? It's painful, isn't it? Wi-san..."

"... Goah..."

Muir could see impatience in Winka's eyes for the first time. Her tail attacked as if to wipe it away but this time her tail stopped just before it hit Muir.

Winka looked at Muir who was crying and froze. Muir gently touched Winka's tail and smiled.

"Guh...?!"

Winka didn't move as if she'd been petrified. Muir could tell that she was perplexed by her expression. Muir moved closer and approached her.

“... It is alright. I am not scared.”

“Gah...”

Muir gently touched Winka’s cheeks and she collapsed. Muir gently moved Winka’s head towards her chest and hugged her.



Sparkling silver particles were released from Muir's ears and whenever she moved, they scattered like pollen. The particles wrapped around the two and a gentle light emitted from it.

"We are all waiting for you. So please return back to the gentle Wi-san."

Winka didn't move anymore and left her fate to Muir.

"I never thought that the Chibi could do it."

Hihiro had approached them unnoticed and released the character 『Origin 元』 at Winka. She didn't avoid it and it stuck to her head.

FLAAAASH!

A bluish-white light emitted from the character and covered her entire body. Her animal ears and tail and the long golden hair wrapped around her body returned to normal. The light faded. She quietly opened her eyes, cried and slowly spoke.

"... I'm sorry... Everyone."



[Hihiro]

"Ah ~ I thought I was going to die. I seriously thought I was going to die. Only this time I was prepared for it ~."

The reason that Arnold was able to calmly drink tea while speaking even though he was on the verge of death before was because Muir and Winka, who had returned to sanity, pleaded with Hihiro to heal Arnold.

They told him they'd give him anything in return if he did it. But this time Hihiro healed him without the promise of compensation because they had used his strategy.

Hihiro had told him to stop Winka, who was rampaging. He knew it had been an unreasonable request since even Hihiro could grasp how strong she was. He thought that since it had also been his fault, he'd heal Arnold's wounds. Besides it would be a waste if he lost his valuable source of information and chef in such a place.

“I’m sorry... I’m really sorry.”

Arnold, himself had told her not to mind it since he was healed with the character 『Heal 治』 but it seems that Winka couldn’t let it go.

“I told you its fine, Wi. I’m alright. Well I almost died but we’re able to laugh together like this. It’s such a waste to keep mumbling on about bygones!”

“... But.”

Winka became despondent and it was obvious that she wasn’t feeling well.

“That’s right, Wi-san! If Wi-san was completely deprived of your consciousness when you 《Beastified》 then surely Uncle would be...”

“... Ah, it’s like Muir said. Wi was desperately trying to resist, right? Wi’s conscious returned in the last attack and I’m still alive.”

Yes, even though Winka had been trapped inside of her mind she was desperately trying to regain control.

It was painful for her to hurt Hihiro and she wanted to do something about it. Those feelings appeared as tears. Muir saw her tears and noticed that she had not completely lost her sanity.

“Wi felt the feelings of Hihiro, Muir and Arnold during the fight.”

Winka closed her eyes, put a hand to her chest and spoke.

“I didn’t want to hurt everyone but my body acted on its own... I tried my best but it wouldn’t listen to me.”

She frowned sorrowfully.

“But when I saw Muir’s eyes at that time, my heart pounded. I was finally able to regain some control of my body.”

Winka had stopped on the verge of attacking Muir with her tail, which was when Winka regained consciousness.

“When Muir hugged me, it was really warm.”

“W-Wi-san...”

Muir was embarrassed.

(Oh yeah, what was happening with the Chibi at that time? It looked her ears were emitting particles of light...)

Only Hihiro had noticed. Even Muir didn't know what she had done. Hihiro was curious about it but thanks to that he was able to return Winka to normal so he didn't mention it.

“I also sensed Hihiro's gentle smell.”

Probably when Hihiro had used 『Origin 元』 .

“It felt like I was being wrapped up in a gentle breeze. Then the wind said this to me, 『You can return now since you're tired』 .”

Arnold stared at Hihiro and Muir giggled,

“Fufu, that sounds like Hihiro-san.”

“Yup... That's why I returned. Arnold, I'm so sorry...”

Winka once again turned towards Arnold and bowed.

“So it's fine. If you apologise too much you'll make me uneasy instead!”

“That's right. Even if Old Man looks like that, he's tough. He won't die from something as little as that. It's pointless to worry. If you worry too much he'll get cocky.”

Arnold grinded his teeth at Hihiro's bluntness.

“Hey you! I'm glad that you healed me but when I'm about to die, I'll die!”

“Liar. It's been speculated that perverted characters live for a long time.”

“What's with that speculation!?”

Hihiro didn't say that it was from anime or manga. Arnold sighed heavily and placed his hand on top of Winka's head.

"Well, I won't tell you to forget about what happened today. On the contrary, you have to remember what happened today, Wi."

"...?"

"You're very strong. Don't forget what happens when you go on a rampage."

"... Yes."

"It also counts as experience. You should reflect on what happened this time and don't rampage again."

"... Is that okay?"

"Of course! And also if you want to say anything say it to Muir. She was the one who stopped you."

"Eh?! I-i-i-i-it's fine!"

Muir flustered when the conversation was dumped onto her. Winka was still as expressionless as ever and politely bowed.

"I'm sorry... And also, thanks for stopping me."

"Wi-san... No it's okay, we are friends. It is only natural to help each other out."

"... Friends?"

"Yes."

"... You'll become Wi's friend?"

"Yes."

"... I-I'm happy..."

Wi blushed and smiled.

“Of course me too, Wi!”

“Yup... Thanks Arnold.”

Winka turned towards Hiiro. He knew what she wanted him to say. However Hiiro didn't obediently admit it.

“... Let's say you're a manservant.”

“Hey you! Why would you say something like that in this kind of mood! Why can't you just say that you're her friend too?!”

“Shut up. Dying Old Man.”

“That's true but what!”

Muir felt relieved seeing their usual exchange.

“Muir, what's a manservant?”

“Eh? Ah, mhm... I-it's a servant...”

Muir was troubled and frowned.

“I see... Servant. I got it. Wi is Hiiro's servant.”

““““Eh?””””

The three including Hiiro unexpectedly harmonised.

“U-um, Wi-san? Do you understand the meaning of servant?”

“Yup... Hiiro is Wi's King^l)... Right?”

“Mhm... Well... That is not wrong but...”

Muir had a feeling the word king was a grave mistake. In a way it served the same purposes. Hiiro did say that but she didn't expect Wi to approve and was upset.

“And so Muir is the Queen?”

“Feh?”

A strange voice came out of Muir.

“Muir was warm... So Muir is also a ruler. But since Muir is a girl so she’s a Queen. Wi is Muir’s servant.”

“Eh... Eh... Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeh!?”

Wi liked Hihiro from the time she met him and Muir had played a great part in stopping her. So that’s why she decided to return the favour by serving them.

“Huh? The King can only be one person so that makes Muir the... Queen?”

“Qu-queeeeeeeeen. And Hihiro-san is the...”

Arnold saw steam was coming out of Muir’s head from whatever she was thinking about and was sullen.

“Oh! Then what am I, Wi?!”

Arnold looked at Wi in anticipation. She gulped, tilted her head and thought for a while.

“Wi and co’s... Exclusive Chef?”

“I have the lowest position!?”

Winka’s rating was surprising.

“Oh, it suits you perfectly. I’ll leave it up to you, Chef.”

“Shut up, Hihiro! Wi, why am I the only one that’s...”

Arnold said sadly, she replied expressionlessly.

“Food is important. So Arnold is important.”

“Eh? Ah... I see, well it’s fine.”

He gave up when he realised that there was no meaning behind Winka's response. It became unintentionally silent.

"But it's a pity we couldn't save the Sky Wolves..."

Winka's expression darkened when Arnold said that.

"Yeah... Wi wants to make a grave for Winger and the others."

"Winger?"

Arnold asked and she told them that she named the Sky Wolf that they'd met Winger and about what had happened at this facility. Arnold and of course Muir, even Hiiro were in a bad mood.

"... Hey Hiiro, is it alright if I smash this facility?"

"It's unpleasant. I also feel like rampaging for a bit."

Winger who he had healed was brutally murdered and so Hiiro was in a bad mood.

"No, I don't want you to rampage, I don't."

Hiiro and co suddenly heard a voice.

CHAPTER 4

ESCAPE FROM BUSCADOR

[Hiiro]

The people that suddenly appeared in front of Hiiro and co were Nagnala and Pevin who Arnold had embedded into the wall a while ago.

“You guys...”

A thirst for blood gushed out of Winka when she saw the two.

“You! Do you wanna be buried in the wall again?!”

Arnold could sense what Winka was feeling and he became angry.

“Shut up! Mhm, ermm... Foe!”

“... You heard their names from the liaison officer a while ago but you do not remember it.”

Pevin said exclaiming in disappointment while shrugging his shoulders.

(... Liaison officer?)

Who is this liaison officer...? Hiiro caught onto the word liaison officer. Nagnala didn't say researcher. He conjectured that it must have been the person riding on that one carriage outside.

“Pevin you're so noisy, you are! It's inevitable that I can't remember the names of the people who're going to die, it is!”

“Well, I cannot deny that but I pity your bad memory.”

“That's wrong, it is! I'm just not interested, I'm not!”

The two had returned intending to kill Hiiro and co. It was unlikely that Hiiro and co

would lose but this was enemy territory, they didn't know what was going to happen. Moreover if everyone was in perfect condition then they wouldn't have to feel anxious but they were considerably exhausted from stopping Winka.

Nagnala and Pevin were currently quarrelling. Hiiro thought that it was possible for them to take advantage of this and escape and looked at Arnold. He knew what Hiiro wanted to do and nodded without saying a word but then Winka suddenly collapsed nearby.

“Wi-san?!”

Muir instantly rushed to her side and touched her shoulder. She saw that Wi's complexion was bad then Arnold said.

“I, I see. It's not unreasonable. It's common for her to get 《Rebound》 after rampaging so much.”

When Hiiro heard what Arnold had said he used 『Peek 覗』 to look at her 《Status》. He was surprised that the parameters of her status had decreased from the time she was 《Beastified》.

Her level was still the same but her status parameters were now lower than Hiiro's. That was what 《Rebound》 was.

Hiiro didn't know when her status would return to normal but he couldn't expect her to fight while she was feeling unwell.

The opportunity to run away was lost. Nagnala turned his attention back to them because of the uproar.

“Oyaoya, it was worth it to choose the right time to appear. She is now experiencing 《Status Drop》.”

Pevin nodded and explained what had happened to Winka.

“Choose the right time to appear?”

Hiiro asked while frowning and Pevin smiled.

“Do you not know? Rampage caused by 《Beastification》 usually goes away after 30 minutes?”

What?! Hiiro wanted to shout, “Then we didn’t have to force her to stop”. He sharply glared at Arnold but Arnold also didn’t know and was flabbergasted.

“If you left her alone she would eventually stop. You just made it more difficult for yourself by trying to stop her, you did. Well, thanks to that useless endeavour we’re able to take advantage of you like this, we can ~.”

Nagnala respectively gazed at Arnold, whose wounds had been healed but he still had no strength; Winka who was unable to fight and lastly at Muir who obviously had no fighting power.

“There’s only one person who can resist, there is... This is what happens when you foolishly exert yourself, it is.”

Nagnala said spitefully. Hiiro tried to reply.

“You are wrong.”

To Hiiro’s surprise the Muir refuted it first. Everyone looked at her dumbfounded.

“Wrong? What’s wrong, what is?”

“Wh-when you laughed and said it was a useless effort, a foolish exertion.”

“What about it?”

“In this world... No effort deserves to be laughed at!”

“...”

“Thanks to Hiiro-san and Uncle, I’m able to stand here like this! Also because Wi-san tried really hard, she heard my voice!”

“Muir...”

Arnold muttered her name. Hiiro was also surprised because he didn’t think that she

could clearly tell other people her opinion.

“You certainly don’t make an effort to be rewarded but I think effort is necessary for moving forward! So there are no wasted efforts!”

She tried her best to shout while her hands were over her chest and her body was shaking. Winka smiled while looking at her but her face instantly stiffened and while using 《Bone Maiden of Victory》 for support, she stood up.

“Yeah... Like Muir said. Effort is necessary.”

“That’s right, Muir. Honestly, my own daughter stole the words right out of my mouth!”

Arnold winked happily at Muir.

“Uncle...”

Muir looked at Hiiro.

“No effort deserves to be laughed at... Well said, Chibi.”

Hiiro was convinced that Muir had grown during the fight against Winka. Hiiro had told her before, “If you’re worried about it then get stronger” but he meant in the long-run. Hiiro was honestly surprised that he could watch her grow this soon.

Hiiro glared at Nagnala.

“That’s what it is. Chubby Man, do you have a problem?”

“Ch-chubby man...?”

Of course it was Nagnala’s nickname. It’s an easy to understand and see nickname.

“Puh...”

“What’re you laughing at, Pevin?!”

“Ah, I am sorry. The nickname is on point and opps.”

“It’s not opps, it’s not! Argh ~, I’m already mad, I am ~!”

Nagnala's face turned red and his nostrils flared but Pevin wasn't reflecting on it at all and remained calm.

"I'm going to open up a hole like before, Old Man. We'll escape from there."

Hihiro didn't know what the enemy would do and remained vigilant while he made the suggestion to Arnold.

"It'll be better that way. I seriously want to kick his ass but Muir is here and Wi is also like that."

Hihiro noticed that they were concerned about battling. Even if he made a hole and they escaped through it, Arnold and the others were fatigued and they might get caught right away.

If so then as a safety measure, Hihiro thought that it would be better to defeat the two people here first.

"It's okay."

Winka listened to what Hihiro and Arnold were saying and spoke.

"What do you mean it's okay, Wi?"

"Wi can still fight. Everyone tried hard for Wi so this time, Wi will protect everyone."

Her eyes shone powerfully but she had no fighting power left. Nagnala started commencing something and Hihiro was worried whether they could break through it.

"Ah ~ enough! I'll relieve my stress by killing them all, I will! Huh...?"

Nagnala said in resentment but then he noticed something and his face turned into displeasure.

"What's the? It's dead, isn't it?"

The Sky Wolf that laid at his feet was Winger, the Sky Wolf who had brought Winka here.

"It's dirty with bloodstains, it is."

Nagnala firmly kicked Winger's face and Winka who saw that, flared up.

"I'll kill you!"

Winka tried to move as if she'd forgotten she was incapacitated but Arnold had somehow managed to restrain her from behind.

"Ca-calm down, Wi!"

"Le-let me go! I'll kill him...!"

Winger had died protecting Winka. It was understandable that she would be angry at Nagnala who was kicking Winger. But if she approached them like this, she would be doing what they wanted. That's why ——

——— SLAP!

"... Eh?"

A sound was heard from Winka's cheeks.

"Get it together, Antenna Girl. Are you going to waste our efforts?"

Hihiro had hit her cheeks. Arnold, Muir and Winka who'd been slapped all stared at Hihiro dumbfounded.

"It'll be pointless if you rampage here."

Thanks to Hihiro's scolding Winka's eyes returned to normal. She cast her eyes downwards and touched her swollen cheeks.

"Mhm... I'm sorry."

Hihiro summarised that they would be caught rather quickly while looking at Winka, although she was standing, she was obviously trembling with fatigue.

"If you've calmed down then leave those guys to me. You escape with Old Man through B Building over there."

"Eh? H-hey Hihiro?"

Arnold hastily called out. Hiiro had said that he would create a hole to escape through but the plan changed so Arnold wanted to ask about it.

“I know I said I would create a hole before but we’ll do without it since these guys will probably get in our way. So it’ll be simpler to just escape through B Building. Old Man, you and the others escape through B Building and I’ll deal with these guys. Quickly leave. You guys are covered in wounds, you’ll only get in my way.”

Hiiro felt that his MP was much less than before. If there were any interruptions while he was making the hole then he would have wasted his MP. So as he had thought earlier, he would deal with Nagnala and Pevin’s first.

Therefore he thought that Arnold and the others could escape from B Building while he faced Nagnala and Pevin. If he could buy some time then the risk of them getting caught would be reduced.

Although Arnold wanted to refute Hiiro’s way of speaking, he swallowed his words.

“... I see. Alright... I got it!”

Arnold nodded in agreement. He acknowledged that Hiiro would be able to deal with them since he had already easily defeated these guys before.

“Wi is also okay...”

“I, I will also avoid being a burden and run!”

Both Winka and Muir were determined. However at that time Winka said quietly, “Ah...”

“Wh-what is wrong, Wi-san?”

Muir asked in concern. Muir saw that she was staring at something and turned to stare at it too.

Nagnala and Pevin also looked as if they were lured.

It was Winger’s corpse. Muir thought that Winka was still conflicted and became sad... But...

“... It’s moving.”

Winka faintly said. Muir raised her face to look at Wi and replied with, “Eh?” Winka pointed her finger at something, it was the back of Winger’s legs.

“Wi-san? What...”

“Look.”

“... Eh?”

Winka said and both Arnold and Muir turned to look at where she was pointing. Like she had said, Winger’s leg was still moving but barely.

From Winger’s stomach to the back to its leg, something was moving inside. The three thought something was wrong and froze. Then, the movement suddenly stopped.

They thought that it was just their imagination but this time a blob of blood and a small body oozed out from Winger’s bottom.

“... Ah?!”

Muir cried and everyone focused on the small body.

“... *whine*...”

It was a small Winger. Winka opened her eyes and tears flowed out.

“H-hey, don’t tell me Winger was pregnant...?”

What Arnold said wasn’t wrong. Winger had a small life inside of her stomach.

“I don’t need such melodrama, I don’t!”

Nagnala suddenly took something out of his pocket and pointed it towards Winger’s child. Hihiro judged that it was some kind of firearm since it looked like a pistol. However a bluish-white light was released from the muzzle and headed straight towards the small Winger. Hihiro guessed that it was a small bullet made out of magic.

It was easy to imagine what would happen if it hit the new born baby.

——— SWOOSH!

To Hihiro's surprise the bullet scattered just before it hit Winger's child and the person who had done this was ———

“——— I won't let you!”

Winka. She was breathing heavily while defending Winger's child with 《Bone Maiden of Victory》 .



“Argh ~ what an odd person. I can't believe that you'd want to protect such a monster, I don't.”

“I'll definitely protect this child...!”

Winka put Winger's child behind her and told them what she had decided. Winger's child was staring at her back.

“... If you want to die that much then be smeared in blood with that beast behind you and die!”

When Nagnala once again readied his gun and tried to shoot, a shadow approached him. It was Hihiro.

“Die!”

Hihiro tried to attack Nagnala with his katana but... Pevin suddenly appeared and protected Nagnala.

(What?!)

Surprised, Hihiro glanced backward and Pevin took a marble out of his pocket and cracked it between his right index finger and thumb.

A bright light was produced from the broken marble and it took away Hihiro's sight. He felt that it would be dangerous to rush in while he was like this and distanced himself.

The light disappeared in an instance but Hiiro was concerned about other things.

(... That guy.)

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“Let’s see ~.”

“There will be a war soon?”

“The Human World will also be engulfed in it, right? It’ll be interesting, it will.”

“Will you take advantage of the situation?”

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“That sounds like a lie...”

“Well, let’s leave it at that.”

“Come to think of it, are we going to walk there, are we?”

“No, no. I think that they will arrive soon so let’s use that. The others are doing the same thing?”

Pevin said while looking around at the other researchers who were standing around looking dumbfounded.

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“In your case Chief, you are a really chubby man so it would be better if you slimmed down a bit.”

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“Ah, I have sweets. Would you like to eat it?”

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“I am joking.”

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“Well, it is night time.”

“That’s not what I meant, it isn’t ~!”

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Muir, Wi and Winger’s child were all safe but Arnold was worried about what they should do now.

Winka suddenly looked uneasily at Winger’s child so Arnold asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Well... This child is kind of trembling.”

“Trembling?”

His small body was certainly trembling in Winka's arms. Arnold thought it was because he had just been born but Winger's child had a painful expression on his face.

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"What's wrong, Uncle?"

"Well, he was born when his mother was infected with poison, wasn't he?"

Winka nodded.

"I, it's possible that he was also infected by the poison, isn't it?"

When they heard that, Muir and Winka stiffened and stared at Winger's child. Even now he was completely exhausted and although the room wasn't cold, Winger's child was trembling.

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Winka asked the child, who was bearing with the pain. He answered with a feeble whine. The other two guessed what the situation was like when they saw that Winka tensed up.

Arnold had guessed correctly. The three didn't know if it was poison or not but they understood that at this rate the child was in danger.

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Seeing how desperate Arnold was, Winka made up her decision and nodded. She passed Winger's child to Muir.

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Muir received the child and when she saw how determined Winka was, she became speechless.

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She spun her flaming spear while rotating her body. It looked like a big fireball was floating in the air. Then the big fireball dropped down onto the mountain of debris.

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But when they saw her lying in the centre of the crater as if she was dead, the two paled.

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The two rushed towards her and checked her condition. Luckily for them, she opened her eyes.

“My... Body... Hurts...”

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“Have a break. Leave the rest to us.”

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(Hurry up, Hihiro!)

Arnold shouted in his mind at the reliable avid reader and headed straight.



“Argh ~ what an odd person. I can’t believe that you’d want to protect such a monster, I don’t.”

“I’ll definitely protect this child...!”

Winka put Winger’s child behind her and told them what she had decided. Winger’s child was staring at her back.

“... If you want to die that much then be smeared in blood with that beast behind you and die!”

When Nagnala once again readied his gun and tried to shoot, a shadow approached him. It was Hihiro.

“Die!”

Hihiro tried to attack Nagnala with his katana but... Pevin suddenly appeared and protected Nagnala.

(What?!)

Surprised, Hihiro glanced backward and Pevin took a marble out of his pocket and cracked it between his right index finger and thumb.

A bright light was produced from the broken marble and it took away Hiiro's sight. He felt that it would be dangerous to rush in while he was like this and distanced himself.

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(Hurry up, Hihiro!)

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“What’s with you?”

“Ar~f.”

He moved his head as if he was pointing at a faraway place.

It was as if he was saying follow me. Hihiro accidentally met Muir’s eyes. She also didn’t know what Winger’s child was doing.

“Hey what’s wrong you two?”

Arnold noticed the two was acting strange and came closer, Winger’s child entered his line of sight.

“... Winger...”

Winka also glanced over with worn-out eyes. Winger’s child was sniffing around and his nose was twitching. It looked as if he was trying to gesture at something.

He raised his face and gave a cute cry, “Arf!”

“He’s telling us to... Follow him.”

Winka interpreted what the Sky Wolf said since she understood him.

“Follow him... Seriously?”

Arnold wasn't the only doubtful one, Hiiro and Muir were also surprised.

“Arf, arf, arf!”

“... He said he wants to help everyone out.”

Muir gently stroked his head.

“Will you show us the way?”

“Arf!”

Winger's child pointed his nose towards the direction he wanted to go. It meant that there was something in that direction. Then an explosion sounded nearby.

“... Let's go.”

“Hey Hiiro.”

“It's only natural that you're anxious, Old Man. But we can't stay here forever, can we?”

“Th-that's...”

“I don't know why but I believe in him.”

Hiiro met Winger's child eyes. Those eyes seemed to be saying, “Believe in me!”

Being hopeless was the worst. Even if he had to give up his books he would make a hole and escape but when he looked at Winger's child he thought it might not have to come to that.

He didn't know why but he felt like things would work out if he followed Winger's child.

“Hey Wingy, hurry up.”

They finally arrived at a single door under Wingy's guidance. Fortunately the room hadn't been destroyed yet. The inside looked like a nap room and there were several beds inside.

Winger's child barked at a certain place. The place he barked at had two beds. Winka who could interpret what he said, spoke.

"There's a sound under the bed."

"A sound?"

Hiiro thought, "What the heck", and bent down to check. Then he found something that looked like a small cover.

"Mhm? What is this?"

He pulled the bed away and opened the cover. There was something that looked like a handle embedded in the wall.

"I see. Try pulling that handle, Old Man."

Arnold did what Hiiro told him to. He placed Winka onto the bed before pulling the handle and it opened. There they found a hole in the floor.

"It's an evacuation route. Well done, Wingy."

"Arf!"

Wingy barked joyfully at Hiiro's praise.

"But how did Winger's child find this...?"

"Save your questions for later, Old Man. We have to ———."

"Hiiro, watch out!"

Winka had noticed that the ceiling was about to collapse and quickly moved herself and Hiiro out of the way.

He heard a painful whack sound coming from Winka's body. When she helped Hiiro,

she had smashed her arm on the floor.

“Hey, Antenna Girl!”

“Argh...”

“Hey, Old Man. Take this!”

“Ok!”

Hiiro threw the wrapping cloth at Arnold. The cloth was quite heavy and Arnold dropped it onto the ground before falling onto his backside.

“Be careful with it!”

“Then don’t throw it at me!”

Hiiro came closer to Winka and held her like a princess. He didn’t notice Muir saying “Woah ~” while blushing because of his actions.

At that time an explosion occurred nearby and the debris hit Hiiro and co, everyone screamed while protecting themselves. The explosion had already reached out far.

It wasn’t just the ceiling, cracks began to run through the floor and up the walls. Everyone concluded that this place would collapse in seconds.

“Hurry up and go!”

Hiiro shouted and everyone hurried to the evacuation route. Muir went down first, then Arnold and finally Hiiro followed.

“Hiiro!”

He saw in Winka’s eyes that the ceiling was getting closer. Hiiro heard her scream and he didn’t need to look up to grasp the situation. Like this, they were going to be crushed by the ceiling.

“Tsk!”

Hiiro jumped down the evacuation route while holding onto Winka. Soon a terrible

sound could be heard from above and debris covered the sky.

“... Fuh, we barely made it.”

Hiiro couldn't move for a while as his back had given way.

The evacuation route became an underground passage. Water was flowing through it like a sewer and the inside was like a cave. It was night outside and the inside was still quite dark.

It was dangerous to go on without lighting so Hiiro wrapped a cloth around the wood that fell down here, lit it up, and used it as a substitute for a torch.

“I see. He must have caught onto the smell and sound of water.”

It was like Hiiro had said, Wingy the Sky Wolf, whose five senses were far better than humans, had sensed that there was water underground. He could also tell that somewhere inside the facility was a hole big enough for people to enter and reach the underground passage.

“You really saved us... Frankly, we weren't in any position to fight. I hope this passage leads to a safe place.”

As Arnold had said, they could have escaped to the outside but there was a chance that they would encounter the enemies. So it was really fortunate for them to find this evacuation route.

It was impossible for the enemies to think that Hiiro and co had found the passage and slipped away. It was all thanks to Wingy that they'd found this place.

“But Antenna Girl, you're also really reckless, huh?”

Hiiro said as he held her in his arms while walking.

“Because... Hiiro is Wi's King so Wi will protect you.”

“You could have been dragged into it too, you know?”

“Hiiro saved that child and Wi as well. So Wi is very happy.”

Winka’s face loosened slightly.

“... Thanks for saving me.”

“Oh ~, are you love-struck, Hiiro?”

“... Where did you learn that word?”

“Arnold taught it to me, you know?”

Hiiro felt that it was necessary to educate Arnold later.



[Muir]

Muir had a complex feeling when she saw Hiiro and Winka talking harmoniously.

It was good that they got along. If they were going to be travelling together for a while then it was something to rejoice about but Muir felt her heart prickling.

(Hmph ~, that’s so nice Wi-san.)

Yes, Muir was jealous. Furthermore Hiiro was carrying Winka like a princess.

(A princess hold... If Hiiro-san did that to me...)

She imagined herself being in Winka’s shoes. Close body contact. Being able to clearly hear Hiiro’s breathing and heartbeat.

Steam blew out from Muir’s face. She had Wingy in her left hand so she touched her face with her right.

(Wooooaaah! Yo-your face is to close Hiiro-ssaaan!)

Muir was in anguish over her delusion. Wingy looked up at her with a look that said, “What’s up with this child?”

(Hah ~, that level is still too high for me... But, but someday...)

Muir wanted Hihiro to hold her like that as well and looked at his back while blood rushed to her head.

“... Hey, this is heavier than I thought it would be...”

No one paid attention to Arnold as he carried the big wrapping cloth on his back while breathing heavily.



[Hihiro]

When they walked for a while a sudden tremor like an earthquake occurred. The tremor wasn't that big and they could still walk.

“Are you okay, Muir?”

Arnold asked Muir even though it was just a small earthquake.

“Yes, I'm okay. Are the books you're holding for Hihiro-san not heavy, Uncle?”

“Ah? This? Hahaha, don't worry about me, Muir. It was pretty heavy at the beginning but I've gotten used to it! It doesn't feel heavy at all anymore!”

Arnold was laughing cheekily but since there was only one torch lighting the passage, Muir couldn't fully see his face.

Furthermore that torch was being held by Winka, who was being held by Hihiro.

“Are we still gonna keep going? Ah? Is that the exit?”

Like Arnold said, they saw a small light in the distance. The sun had already set outside so that was probably the moonlight.

When Hihiro and co nearly made it outside they all let out a sigh of relief but just as they did an earthquake shook the ground. Moreover it was a big one this time, then they heard the sound of something collapsing behind them.

“... Eh... Hey... Don’t tell me...”

They heard an unpleasant sound from the ceiling.

“Hi-Hihiro!”

“I know! Let’s hurry it up!”

It wasn’t safe here anymore. While they were running dirt and debris fell from the ceiling.

The light gradually grew bigger and brighter as they approached the exit until finally four people and an animal stepped out of the dark, gloomy passage and onto the ground where the moonlight shone.

The passage behind them instantly collapsed.

“Haahaahaahaah... Seriously... I’m sick and tired of escaping.”

Hihiro sat down and Winka followed suit while Muir patted her chest and let out a sigh of relief.

“Ah ~, we’re safe ~. Are you okay, Muir?”

“Y-yes. This child is also okay.”

Wingy who was in Muir’s arms barked cheerfully, “Arf!” Hihiro took a deep breath and looked at Arnold who was basked in moonlight, then an uncomfortable feeling overwhelmed him.

Hihiro couldn’t see the wrapping cloth on Arnold’s back and thought that he had put it down somewhere,

“Old Man, where are my books?”

“Hah? What’re you saying? It’s right... Here...?”

Arnold pointed his thumb at his back while turning to look at it but the swelling that was supposed to be on his back wasn’t there.

“... Eh, huh?”

“Mhm, Uncle, it’s torn at the bottom?”

Muir pointed out, then Arnold immediately spread the wrapping cloth in front of him to confirm; there was a big hole in the wrapping cloth.

“It can’t be, Uncle...?”

Muir timidly looked at the blocked off evacuation route. Arnold also looked at the route and clapped his hands together.

“Ah, I see. I thought that the cloth had gotten lighter half way through so that was the books falling out! I thought my muscles adapted well to the weight of the wrapping cloth but...”

Arnold nodded his head in agreement but Muir and Winka even Winger’s child looked at his back while trembling.

“Well ~, shucks... Huh? What’s wrong Muir? You look so frightened... Huh?”

A hand patted Arnold’s shoulder. He felt a dreadful negative aura coming from behind him and his body trembled.

“Old Man... Have you prepared yourself?”

“Nooooooooooooooooooooo Hihiro! This is the act of god!”

“There’s nothing to argue about!”

“Nnnnnnnnoooooooooooooo!”

There was a small spring in front of the evacuation route. The passage was made by digging into a rocky place. After exiting the long route everyone was finally able to relax and enjoy the outside scenery.

One person was silent and had their face buried in the ground...

It was night outside and the moon was peeking out from behind the clouds but they needed to make an effort to get out of here before the pursuers caught up.

“Hey, let’s hurry up and leave, Useless Pervert.”

“M-my body is...”

Hiiro kicked Arnold’s battered bottom, motivating him to move. Arnold also knew it was his fault and didn’t argue.

“Well, I know it was bad but... It was dark in there and my body was sore, I was almost at my limits. So my abilities dropped so I didn’t think anything of it when the books fell out and the load got lighter... I also wondered why I was carrying the books in that kind of situation...”

“What?”

“I’m really sorry!”

Hiiro became angry like always at Arnold’s excuses and Arnold quickly lowered his head.

There was no use in staying angry forever but Hiiro was in shock.

(Ah, what the heck did I try so hard for...?)

Hiiro’s weariness increased as his reward disappeared.

They walked along the river, branching away 【Buscador】. They decided to take a break after putting considerable distance between themselves and Buscador.

Everyone was feeling tired but Hiiro had something he had to do with his remaining MP.

He had to heal Winka’s wounds. When they were escaping from 【Buscador】, Winka had protected him from the collapsing ceiling.

He really should have healed her before coming here but he had reserved MP just in case something happened.

Hiiro wrote 『Heal 治』 on Winka and activated it; a blueish-white light wrapped around Winka.

“... It’s warm.”

Winka who entrusted herself to the light, felt comfortable at the light’s warmth and she smiled.

“Try moving your arms.”

Hihiro instructed her to move the arm that might have broken when she protected him.

“... Yup, it doesn’t hurt.”

“I see.”

“Thanks Hihiro.”

“You don’t have to thank me, you received that wound protecting me. So it’s only natural that I’m the one who heals it.

Winka nodded and embraced Wingy, who ran up into her arms.

“Come to think of it, what are you going to do with that child?”

Arnold pointed at Wingy as he asked.

“... What will you do?”

Winka looked into Wingy’s eyes and he cheerfully replied, “Arf!”

“He said he’ll come with me.”

“I see, you’re still a baby. I guess we can’t leave you like this and if Winka said she’ll take care of you then I guess that’s okay?”

“Yup, I’ll take care of him the best I can.”

“Arf!”

Wingy barked cheerfully.

“Well then you will have to give it a name, Wi-san!”

Like Muir said, Hihiro wondered how long he would be called Winger's child for.

"Hihiro, you're calling him Wingy, right?"

Arnold said, proposing that they use that name for him but,

"No, this child is Winger."

"Eh, but Wi... Is that fine?"

Winger is the name of the child's mother. It is the name of the dead Sky Wolf.

"Yup, Winger also said that he wanted to be called that."

"Arf!"

"Haha, Wi's ability to hear the voice of monsters is useful."

"... Vi."

Winka made a peace sign.

"But well, he's a good kid so isn't that all that matters?"

"Yup, that's right."

Both Arnold and Muir approved.

"Hihiro, this child is called Winger."

Winka held Winger up and introduced him to Hihiro.

"Is that so? Isn't that great, Wingy."

"... It's Winger."

"To me it's Wingy."

"Hmph..."

Winka puffed out her cheeks at the unyielding Hihiro, but Winger barked happily at

being called Wingy, “Arf, arf!”

Winka reluctantly agreed because Winger said so.

“Anyway, today was really tiring ~.”

“That’s right...”

Arnold and Muir said while breathing loudly and Winka looked apologetic.

“I’m sorry everyone and thank you... For everything.”

“Hahaha, thank you was all you needed to say.”

“That is right, Wi-san! It is only natural for friends to help each other out!”

“Arnold... Muir...”

Winka smiled faintly and turned to face Hiiro.

“Hiiro, I want to thank you as well.”

“I was only here for the books... Well, I feel like I’ve worked for free though...”

Hiiro sighed deeply.

“Sorry, Wi. If we’d arrived at the institute a little earlier then we might have been able to save that child’s mother as well.”

“... Nope. I’m happy that you came at all... It’s sad that I wasn’t able to save this child’s mother... But...”

“I thought so...”

“It would be great if they were all in heaven... And...”

“Mhm?”

“I want to make beautiful graves for everyone....”

Winka’s kindness engulfed the atmosphere. She couldn’t save them... She had never

wished for this terrible outcome.

A solemn mood washed over everyone and it was quite difficult to get rid of it. Arnold and Muir also looked like they were worried about how to deal with it. But in the next minute...

STOMACH GRUMBLE

An out of place earth trembling-like sound suddenly resounded.

“H-hey Hiiro...”

That was the sound of Hiiro’s stomach grumbling.

“... I’m hungry.”

“Hey you, how could you in this mood...”

STOMACH GRUMBLE!

“... Huh?”

Surprisingly the same sound was heard from another person. It was a somewhat cute sound.

“... I’m hungry.”

“W-Wi, you too...”

Winka, who had caused the previous mood, made such a sound so Arnold and Muir turned towards each other and smiled.

“Alright! For the time being, let’s eat!”

“Okay, Uncle!”

“Let’s eat...”

“Arf!”

Arnold, Muir, Winka and Winger all respectively said cheerfully.

(Ah, nevertheless... I wanted to read those books.)

Hiiro was still depressed but he couldn't fight against his hunger, at this rate he would binge so he clenched his fists.



[Arnold]

Fortunately for them there was a river and forest nearby so they decided to procure food from there. They were really fatigued but it was for the sake of food so after resting a little, everyone went to gather food.

Arnold and Muir went to the forest to search for fruits and hunt monsters while Winka and Hiiro gathered water from the river and fished.

"Alright! We found better ingredients than I thought we would, I'll start cooking!"

"Okay!"

"Wi will also help."

It wasn't only Muir that responded to Arnold's enthusiasm but Winka as well.

As for Hiiro, he had completely exhausted his MP and was now limping against a rock with Winger.

"Well, we had his help this time as well."

"That's right. Let's make something delicious, Uncle!"

"Wi will do her best too."

Arnold looked at Hiiro, who remained still with his eyes closed, and thought.

(He's really amazing. He really exceeds expectations and only his reasoning is direct.)

Hiiro was definitely arrogant and selfish.

However once Hiiro promised something he'd see it through until the end and he was very sincere to people who helped him out so he gave Arnold a good impression.

Arnold grinded his teeth thinking about how much they relied on Hiiro's power this time. Hiiro's convenient magic that he knew nothing about seemed to consume a considerable amount of MP.

Even though Hiiro looked like that, he had put a lot of effort into escaping and he was moved when he saw Hiiro heal Winka.

It was true that Winka and Winger had made it here safely because of Hiiro.

(Well, even if he did it for the books...)

Since everyone was safe because of it, Arnold decided that it was fine.

(Also, I'll try not to lose the books he wants next time...)

Arnold underlined the words, "Hiiro, book and food", in his mind in red.



At that time the ringleaders who had destroyed 【Buscador】 , Nagnala and Pevin had encountered some people under the starry sky.

"Well, you contacted us but when we arrived at the facility, it had been destroyed?"

The name of the person who was obviously displeased was Folse Wagner.

He was the commander of 《Beast Cage》 and the one who had kidnapped Muir the other day in order to sell her to the rich but that plan was hindered through the strenuous efforts of Arnold and Hiiro.

At that time Hiiro had shamed him and he vowed in his heart that he would definitely get revenge on Hiiro.

He had been searching for Hiiro and co earlier today when he received a report from a liaison agent. The report said that Hiiro and co had been sighted at 【Buscador】 so he headed there.

On the way there he received information that 《Moonlight》, who had defeated many people from 《Beast Cage》, was also here.

Even more so than 《Moonlight》, a chance to capture Hiiro was more than enough motivation for him to come to Buscador.

Folse didn't care that 【Buscador】, a place they had financed and used for information had been destroyed because they still had many other facilities left.

The only thing he cared about was that he had missed his opportunity to kill Hiiro with his own hands.

“Listen carefully, there's a possibility that they took advantage of the dark and snuck away. Search everywhere even if you have to remove the debris with your magic. Do whatever you can to find them!”

Folse swung his characteristic topknot around while saying hotly.

“If you find them then let me know. I don't care if they're dead or alive. Retrieve anything that might lead us to them.”

His subordinates who were clad in white-robos replied before scattering. Nagnala and Pevin felt uncomfortable as they watched everyone get busy.

“Mhm ~, do you think they will find them, do you?”

“Who knows? There was an explosion.”

“Well, it doesn't really matter if they're dead or alive.”

“Are you fine with them being alive?”

“It was satisfying to watch them pale when the explosion happened, it was. Kufufu ~.”

“My goodness, you have wonderful sensitivity.”

The two knew that 《Beast Cage》 would come here because it was the organisation that had provided them with specimens for experimentation.

They decided to take the researchers, Nagnala and Pevin who had escaped from 【Buscador】 to the nearest town in their carriage.

“Ah ~, nevertheless I’m so hungry, I am ~.”

Nagnala put his hands on his big stomach and grumbled.

“What are you saying? Did they not provide you with food a while ago? If you eat any more than that, you will get fat. Even though you are already fat.”

Pevin cut off Nagnala’s sentence with his wicked tongue.

“Ah! Now that I think about it, there’s still some sweets in the facility that haven’t been eaten yet, they haven’t!”

“They’re already useless are they not?”

Pevin pointed at the destroyed 【Buscador】. Nagnala trembled.

“Uoah ~, it’s all the Red Robe’s fault that things have gotten like this, isn’t it?!”

Nagnala whined noisily and flung his arms and legs around like a child.

“Well, well, you were planning to destroy the facility sometime in the future, were you not?”

“I did, but you know ~. It’s a waste of sweets, it is!”

“Besides it seems that everything will be set in motion soon, maybe there is a notice in the 【Human World】?”

“... This country, its King and its people. I find it hard to understand why someone would establish an organization like 《Beast Cage》, I do.”

“Why don’t you ask them directly?”

“No way, I loathe being used by people.”

Nagnala said as he picked his nose.

“But I think they will call on you soon, you know? The war between the beastman and the demons will occur soon.”

“... I’ve always wondered this but where do you get your information from, Pevin?”

“What can I say...? My hobby is information collection.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“Well, well, is it not fine? My position is a mysterious researcher, after all.”

“... Whatever. Is there really going to be a war?”

Nagnala switched to his next question when he concluded that Pevin wouldn’t answer.

“Yes, apparently the beastman are becoming more active. It seems that the 《Three Beast Samurai》 are also flying around the world.”

“Hmph.”

“Oya, Are you not interested? The 《Three Beast Samurai》 are quite famous, you know?”

“If I could dissect them then I’d be interested, yup.”

“I see. This time if there really is a war then King Rudolph will be taking a wait and see approach.”

“Just like a coward king.”

“Furthermore the human world may be engulfed in the war as well.”

“Pevin you said we should take advantage of that opportunity right?”

“Yes, that is why we should get them to drop us off at a nearby town for now, then we should go to the other facilities and also adopt the wait and see approach.”

“That’s right! Let’s also eat delicious things!”

Nagnala boasted while sticking out his chest as if he had just been hit with a brilliant

idea.

“Then let us do that.”

“Ah, before that can I have Pevin’s meal, can I?”

“Good children should go to bed, Chief.”

He lightly ignored Nagnala’s request.

“What ~!? There’s a route leading underground!”

Folse heard from his subordinate that they had found the route after clearing the debris. However it was impossible to enter the tunnel, the subordinate said he could not go any further.

Folse asked the other researchers about the evacuation route.

“It seems that the evacuation route was also destroyed.”

“I’m not interested, I’m not ~.”

“Maybe they evacuated through there?”

“I’m not interested, I’m not ~.”

“Please do not fall asleep here. If you want to sleep, please do so in the carriage. If I have to carry the chubby Chief to the carriage, my thin arms will break.”

“... I’ll smashed Pevin’s together with bean paste and bake you to make delicious sweet buns.”

“That is scary.”

While the two were having their stupid conversation, Folse had no doubt that Hiirō and co had survived. Just like Pevin, he knew they had escaped through the evacuation route and ordered his men to find out where it led to.

“I will definitely find you, Red Robe!”

Folse got fired up by himself.

EPILOGUE

[Hiiro]

“Well then, let’s eat!”

Arnold shouted and everyone said, “Bon appetite” at the same time.

Many dishes were laid out on leaves in front of them. Although Hiiro couldn’t say the food was luxurious, the fragrant still tickled his nose.

The thing that Hiiro grabbed first was bone-in meat. Something that looked like thick sauce was spread on top of the meat.

“Ah, that’s 《Grey Pork Cuts drenched in Lemon Sauce》.”

“Hoh.”

The bone-in meat had a soft texture and the delicious grilled smell drifted in the air. Hiiro, who couldn’t bear it anymore, bit into the meat.

“——— Oh?!”

The meat was as soft as it looked and it melted in his mouth. The meat’s juices overflowed in his mouth.

(This is delicious and this sauce is superb!)

There was a hint of the lemon’s acidity and a subtle sweetness. It was incredibly delicious, the sauce matched well with the meat’s fat.

Arnold laughed guessing what Hiiro had thought.

“Muir made that sauce, you know”

“The Chibi did?”

She shyly looked downwards when Hiiro looked at her.

“Not bad, Chibi. Good job.”

Hiiro praised her.

“Th-thank you. I’m... Happy. Ehehe.”

Muir smiled cutely as blood rushed to her head. Winka and Winger were both wholeheartedly chewing on the meat. That was proof that the meat was delicious.

Next, Hiiro put the fish that Winka had caught into his mouth. It was also delicious.

(It tastes like grilled fish and the lumpy thing in the middle... Is it egg? I can get addicted to this texture.)

The fish was simply grilled with salt and the small burnt part of the fish stimulated his appetite.

“That’s 《Grilled Big Egg Salmon》. I didn’t think we’d find them in this river. Listen carefully, the special thing about this fish is that there are eggs in a female’s stomach. As the name suggests, the eggs are very large. That’s why you can briefly enjoy that texture. It’s quite popular.”

Arnold began boasting about the ingredients and Hiiro knew it was as popular as he had said. The salmon itself was tender and delicious. Hiiro couldn’t get tired of the lumpy texture.

Everyone had a pleasant meal together.

When they finished eating and everyone had rested enough, Winka who was holding Winger headed towards Hiiro.

“Hiiro...”

“What do you want?”

Suddenly Winka slowly lowered her head and said, “Thank you”.

“... I told you that you didn’t need to thank me, didn’t I?”

“Yeah, but Wi should thank you for saving Wi and Winger after all.”

“Arf.”

Winger leapt from her arms, walked towards the rock where Hihiro was sitting, and rubbed his face against Hihiro like a cat.

Hihiro stared at Winger then stretched out his hand to pet Winger’s head. Winger barked pleasantly, “Ar~f” because it felt good.

Then Winka came closer to Hihiro for some reason and stuck out her small head.

“... What’re you doing?”

“... I want you to stroke my head.”

“I told you before that I won’t do it.”

“But it’s unfair for you to only be petting Winger.”

“It’s thanks to him that we were able to escape and in the first place he’s like a pet, right?”

Petting the head of a small animal was different from stroking the head of a person. Winka, however, did not give up and turned her teary eyes up at Hihiro.

“I’ve said it before right? If you want me to stroke your head then do something...”

Hihiro said but then remembered that she had saved him and because of that she got wounded.

Hihiro had already healed her wounds but she certainly did something good. Hihiro stared into her eyes and her beautiful clear pupils stared right back at him. Her eyes were mixed with the same purity as a small animal like Winger.

Hihiro exhaled deeply in resignation. He stretched out his hand and placed it on top of Winka’s head and slowly moved it.

Winka slightly twitched her body and closed her eyes. Her expression was one of satisfaction.

“Fuh...”

A sound similar to a sigh escaped from Winka’s mouth.

(Well, she’s like a small animal.)

Her body was small, her behavior and speech was also like a small animal’s. Her existence made people want to protect her.

“Listen carefully, we’re even now.”

“... Yup... That’s fine but just a little... More.”

Winka asked him to continue stroking her head. Hiiro thought that if she was satisfied with this then he would continue even though it was troublesome. Winger was also feeling satisfied and climbed onto Hiiro’s lap.

Hiiro had the rare experience of petting two things at the same time.

“Ehehe, it feels good...”

“Is that so?”

Hiiro continued stroking their heads while remembering the time he spent at the orphanage.

When he was there he also stroked the children’s heads like this and they told him to continue doing so because it felt good.

It gradually escalated and then he was stuck with stroking their heads everyday. Finally it got so troublesome that he declared to the children that he would no longer be doing it anymore.

The children were unhappy and their words were harsh but Hiiro couldn’t understand why he was stroking their heads in the first place.

Being treated like a child was unpleasant for Hiiro, even when he was a child so he didn’t understand the meaning of being stroked on the head.



[Muir]

Muir who was cleaning up with Arnold was shocked when Hihiro began stroking Winka's head.

(E-e-eh!? Wh-why is Wi-san being stroked on the head!?)



Hihiro surely turned her down once before.

Even so Muir didn't know what had changed and was looking at Winka enviously.

"Eh, Wi looks happy."

Arnold said next to Muir without knowing how she felt.

"She didn't have any parents to stroke her head like that."

Muir who had heard that gasped and remembered Winka's past.

She had been travelling since she was little in search of her father and since she was a human and beastman half breed she probably didn't have anyone to stroke her head like that.

When she had met them, Arnold and Hihiro had stroked her head and it was apparent that she felt a sense of security for the first time in a while.

"I see, Wi-san... She's always been alone."

Arnold who had heard Muir's mutter, shrugged his shoulders and continued cleaning up.

(B-but that looks nice... Being stoked on the head...)

Muir imagined that she was also being stroked on the head by Hihiro and felt her face heating up.

"Uoh... It's somewhat embarrassing."

She wanted him to stroke her head too but it was embarrassing. In her dilemma Muir answered.

(Yup! I'll get him to stroke my head someday!)

She made it her goal to be stroked on the head by Hihiro in the near future.

"Hey ~, help me out Muir ~."

“Ah, yes!”

Muir turned back in response to Arnold’s voice but then stopped and stared at Winka.

(Wi-san! I won’t lose to you!)

With that determination in mind, the delusional girl moved.



Several days after Hiiro and co had escaped from 【Buscador】 .

The four heroes who had returned from completing a subjugation quest were checking their 《Status》 . They told Lilith and Vale about their growth.

“No matter how many times I hear it, it’s amazing!”

Vale’s eyes widened as he said in admiration. He was the heroes’ instructor and also the captain of the second division army that the 【Human Country • Victorias】 boasted about.

The person next to him who had the same delightful look was Princess Lilith.

“What’s amazing?”

Taishi Aoyama asked representing everyone, he was the only male in the hero group. He had his head tilted like the other heroes.

“May I? People can only have one magic attribute. Of course there are exceptions to this. There are certainly people who have multiple attributes depending on how talented they are. However I have never heard of someone having three or even four attributes like you all do. Moreover light attribute magic is something only the 『Spirit Race』 can handle. As expected of heroes, you all have light magic.”

Everyone laughed awkwardly at Vale’s praises. They were happy that they were all cheats.

“Moreover Vale-san was surprised at how fast you all are levelling and learning magic.”

Vale nodded in agreement with Lilith's words.

"Also if we look at your magic and physical abilities, Taishi-sama and Chika-sama are the vanguard-types while Shuri-sama and Shinobu-sama are the rear guard-types. Your status is also specialised in that way."

Taishi and Chika's 《Status》 certainly stressed on attack power while Shinobu and Shuri's emphasized defence and support. Their magic was also the same.

"This is a very well-balanced team, is it not?"

Lilith said happily while putting her hands together and laughing.

"Hahaha, it was the same when we played online games!"

"Seems like it!"

Chika Shizumiya, a hero like Taishi, looked at him and laughed. They made a team of four when they played online RPGs.

On those occasions, Taishi and Chika would be the offensive players while Shuri Minamoto and Shinobu Akamori were the support players. Their roles of those times reflected magnificently in this world.

"If we level up then our 《Status》 will also increase accordingly, right?"

"Heh, it's exactly like an RPG. By the way, what level are you Vale?"

"Me? I am level 58."

"Woah ~, as expected of a captain. Did you level up by defeating monsters?"

"Yes. You can also get EXP from completing quests."

"Come to think of it, we've done quite a lot of quests since we've been summoned, huh ~. Guilds are the best!"

"Yes. Guilds are the best part of the game ~."

The one who agreed with Taishi was Shinobu.

“Moreover, I feel safe with everyone.”

Shuri smiled softly as she said that and a gentle fluffy feeling floated about her.

“But I was surprised at the beginning. Being an adventurer is such a dangerous job but when we talked about quests and guilds you all became very happy and immediately wanted to register.”

“Because it’s a guild, you know! Adventures and quests! It’s exciting for gamers, right everyone?”

“Yes, you’d normally itch to put your skills to use.”

It wasn’t just Chika, the other two were also nodding. Taishi looked satisfied.

“You are promising.”

Vale misunderstood their optimistic thoughts and smiled remembering their brave and promising words.

Lilith interrupted then and opened a wrapping paper in front of Taishi.

“Mhm, Taishi-sama. If you do not mind, please have some of this.”

“Eh? What’s this Lilith?”

“It is a cookie that I made with the maids today.”

“Eh ~, then I’ll have one.”

Taishi put a star-shaped cookie into his mouth and ate it.

“Oh! It’s delicious, Lilith!”

“I-is that so!? Ah, I am glad.”

Lilith blushed and looked downwards as if she was embarrassed but she looked quite happy. Chika who saw that, was sullen and stabbed her elbow into Taishi’s arm.

“That hurts! Wh-what’re you doing Chika!?”

“Hpmh, your nose was stretching you, Womanising Demon!”

“Wo-womanising demon...”

Taishi was shocked by those words and dropped his shoulders, crestfallen.

“Ev-everyone please eat it as well.”

Lilith intervened while flustered, covering for Taishi. He looked at her gratefully and Chika was once again displeased.

Taishi thought that it was bad and tried desperately to change the topic.

“Mh-mhm, th-that! Hey Vale.”

“Ah, yes. What is it?”

“N-no, I was wondering if there were any problems in nearby cities recently.”

“Problems...?”

Vale asked, thought for a while and said, “Now that I think about it.”

“What happened?”

“Yes well, it’s not directly connected to this country but a facility called 【Buscador】 had mysteriously collapsed recently.”

“Eh, what kind of a facility is it?”

“It seems that they research monster ecology but I do not know the details. Sorry.”

Vale said apologetically. Lilith also didn’t know and tilted her head.

“But there is something that concerns us...”

“Something that concerns you?”

“Yes, according to the researchers that escaped from there, it was done by a group of bandits.”

“Bandits?”

“Yes and one of the bandits resembled the person who wears that red robe.”

The Red Robe was the man who saved a certain village from notorious Adventures. He also helped beastman who were unreasonably captured by 《Beast Cage》.

This time, however, he was treated as a bandit who may have destroyed a research facility.

“Isn’t it a different person?”

“But he had black hair and glasses. His characteristics are similar to that person we discussed before.”

“Hmph, well if he really did something bad then wouldn’t they catch him eventually?”

Chika said, she wasn’t really interested in talking about this kind of stuff.

“Ah, speaking about glasses that reminds me, I wonder how that guy is?”

Taishi said remembering the person who had been summoned with them. Chika reacted to that.

“... What are you saying all of a sudden...? That guy?”

“You know, Okamura. Okamura.”

“Ah...”

Chika replied coldly as if she wasn’t interested.

“Wasn’t he dragged into this because of us? I actually feel pretty bad about it.”

“What are you saying now? Okamura said he didn’t blame us for anything. There’s no need for you to worry about it. He left on his own.”

“Mhm ~ but...”

“First, I don’t like guys like him.”

“Really?”

“Yes. He’s always alone. He’s doesn’t feel lonely because he can do everything by himself. I don’t feel good when I see people like that.”

The three listened quietly to Chika’s angry words.

Hiiro was their classmate but they’ve never talked to him before. They had never seen him talk to anyone before either.

He was like air, they didn’t notice him. He always skipped class and when he didn’t, he would sleep at his desk or read books.

“Even if he’s a loner, he should tone it down!”

“Hey Chika. Why’re you so upset?”

“Isn’t he just so irritating?! He rarely comes to class yet he does better than me in all the tests. What’s with that!?”

“N-no, why’re you asking me...? Isn’t it because you’re just not very...”

“What?!”

“N-no... Nothing!”

Hiiro rarely came to class at all.

Even if he came, he was always sleeping so he never heard the teacher’s lectures but for some reason his grades were good and that’s why Chika was so angry.

“N-now, now. What if Okamura-kun was studying and reviewing work at home?”

Shuri defended Hiiro by proposing a possibility.

“Certainly ~, there’s the possibility of him having a tutor or going to cram school ~.”

Shinobu added.

“How would I know?!”

Chika puffed out her cheeks and turned away from them. Taishi sighed in relief.

“Is Okamura-dono your friend¹⁾?”

Vale said. He valued Hihiro differently since he attached –dono to Hihiro’s name instead of –sama.

“He’s not our friend!”

“Well, he’s our classmate... We studied in the same place together.”

“Oh, is that so? Is it really alright for him to be alone?”

“Eh?”

“This world is full of dangers. Of course this includes the 『Demon-kin』, but there are also disputes between people of the same race. There is a high possibility that he became an adventurer since he is on his own. However it does not seem like he has any prominent combat skills like you, Hero-sama... Recently we have information that things are getting lively in the 『Beastman』 country, 【Beast Kingdom • Pasion】. Perhaps, war is near...”

If Hihiro was caught up in it then he could die. Everyone could predict what Vale was trying to say.

A heavy silence filled the area. Even if they weren’t friends it was unpleasant for a classmate to die.

“It is all because I summoned that person...”

Gentle Lilith said that she was the person most responsible for this and was depressed. Silence filled the area again since no one knew what to say. Then Chika broke the silence.

“Argh, enough! It doesn’t matter how much you worry about that egotistic guy! All you have to think about right now is to become stronger!”

“Chika’s so strong.”

“Got a problem with that? If we defeat the 『Demon-kin』 and it becomes peaceful wouldn't he be able to live peacefully too?!”

Everyone opened their mouths, flabbergasted at those words. They had never thought that such words would come out of Chika, since she was so angry earlier.

“Chika-chan... You're so nice.”

Shuri said happily while smiling. Chika blushed and yelled.

“Yo-you're mistaken! I was only simply... Ah, whatever! This conversation is over! It's over, you hear me?! Okay!”

The three said, “Yes, yes” while looking amused.

“It is as Chika-sama said. Please just think about getting stronger for now.”

Vale said and everyone nodded.



【Demon Country • Chaos】 located far north of the 【Human Country • Victorias】 .

In a room at the castle of the Demon King, located within Chaos, sitting around a long table staring at each other were the 『Demon-kin』 warriors.

Three chairs were arranged on each side of the long table like in a meeting room. Five of the chairs were occupied while one person sat in a position that overlooked them. There was an attendant standing next to them.

There were a total of seven people in this room. The only person standing had snow white hair and a serious look on her face. Her name was Kiria and she spoke.

“Well then, I would like to begin the Demon Country conference. First allow me to take attendance, like always we will begin with the lowest ranking member.”

Then Kiria shifted her gaze to the person sitting farthest away from her.

“ 《Rank 6》 , Grayald-sama.”

“Yup.”

A darkish young man in his 20s who had his elbows on the desk and an expression that said he couldn't be bothered, answered. His trademark was his pointed head that looked like a sea urchin.

“《Rank 5》, Shublars-sama.”

“Here ~, Ufufu.”

A sociable, voluptuous woman answered while moving her purple lips upwards in a smile. She had an outstanding figure and was dressed provocatively, exposing her breasts.

“《Rank 4》, Ornoth-sama.”

A man covered in blue hair with a face like a wolf, nodded.

“《Rank 3》 Teckil-sama is absent due to other commitments.”

A small click of the tongue could be heard. It came from,

“《Rank 2》 Marione-sama.”

It was a man with a stern face, he was obviously in the military. He was frowning with displeasure. He had a moustache that people would want to touch above his mouth.

Kiria continued without paying him any heed.

“《Rank 1》, Aquinas-sama.”

“Yeah.”

A man with red hair muttered quietly. He had a dignified atmosphere about him. Like a woman, his tensed face attracted both men and woman.

“Now onto today's agenda. I now present, Her Majesty Eveam.”

Kiria prompted the blonde girl sitting next to her, Eveam, to speak.

“Um, okay.”

Eveam was a young girl of about sixteen or seventeen years of age. She had beautiful blonde hair which was the envy of many. Her face looked a little childish but she was still a beautiful girl.

She opened her eyes and revealing her clear bright blue eyes. When she tried to open her red lips to speak, 《Rank 2》 Marione promptly raised his hands.

“... What’s wrong, Marione?”

“It is not what is wrong, Your Majesty. Why is there someone absent from the conference?”

“Because I gave him a job to do.”

“A job? Hoh, is that job more important than the conference?”

“Yes. Besides, it’s not like it doesn’t have anything to do with this conference. Hear me out first.”

“... Is that so?”

He didn’t look satisfied but backed down for now.

“Okay, I’m going to be frank: the 『Human Race』 has succeeded in summoning the heroes.”

Those who were obviously displeased, those who were interested, and even those who were indifferent: everyone reacted to what Eveam said.

“Is that true, Your Majesty?”

Shublars asked and she nodded.

“Yes, Teckil reported it. There’s no doubt.”

“I see. You sent him into the human world.”

Marione nodded in understanding.

“Yes, but I’m thinking of having a look into the beast kingdom now.”

“That’s right, we have to be more wary of the 『Beastman』 more so than the 『Human Race』 right now anyway.”

“Indeed. I received a delayed report that some of my subordinates were attacked. Of course they retaliated but it took some time.”

Grayald said casually but his words were mixed with anger.

“Yes. The heroes are certainly a threat but we can ignore them for now. We must focus on the 『Beastman』. Their physical abilities are far above ours and they’ve invented a strange ability which is quite troublesome. Moreover they’re belligerent.”

“They have that strange ability to compensate for their lack of magic. However, it’s still in the middle of development so now’s the time to strike.”

Marione said and Eveam shook her head.

“No, as I’ve previously said, we will not engage in war!”

Marione suddenly slammed the table attracting everyone’s attention.

“Are you out of your mind?! Our brethren are being killed! We have to crush them before they become a bigger threat!”

“No, if we do so, we would merely be following in the footsteps of the late king! We are pursuing a world where all races can live in peace!”

“Then we just need to eliminate all hindrances!”

“No! Doing so would only bring about hatred! Conflict calls for more conflict, it instigates the flames of war and ultimately it will destroy our 【Edea】 !”

“Then what should we do?! Are you telling us to sit back and accept their actions?!”

“Exactly!”

“Wha...?!”

He didn't expect her to confirm his words and froze.

"The late king... My brother took power by killing our father and tried to create a world for only us, the 『Demon-kin』. This is the result. Is this what you want? Do you call a world where each race glares at, fights and hurt each other, a righteous one?"

Everyone remained silent while listening to her words.

"My brother was too radical and he was assassinated because of it. The 『Beastman』 were probably responsible for it but that doesn't matter now. Anyway, excessive control would only result in straining relations. Those strained relationships would increase and would eventually lead to conflict. Isn't that sad...? All living beings in this world have the right to live in it. Why do we have to fight over it...?"

She said sadly while casting her eyes down. Kiria noticed that her shoulders were slightly trembling and gently placed her hands on Eveam's shoulders.

"I'm fine, Kiria. Thanks."

She raised her face and looked at everyone.

"The ideal result would be for us to cooperate with the other races or at the very least, there must be a method where no one needs to get hurt!"

"How idealistic."

Marione discarded.

"Yes, it's idealistic. But with the way things are now, blood will just continue to spill."

"We are the 『Demon-kin』. Why must we honour the other races?"

"Life in itself, is a wonderful thing."

"..."

Eveam had the appearance of a sixteen or seventeen year old girl. In Marione's eyes, she was nothing but a brat. But the power in the gaze of that brat took his breath away for a moment.

“That’s why we won’t fight with our full power. Waging war is just absurd!”

“Mhm ~, but Your Majesty, all the other races ignored your letters for a peace treaty.”

Shublars was right. Eveam had repeatedly sent out letters to reconcile but there were no reply. They didn’t respond at all.

“Well it’s not unreasonable. During the late king’s reign, the killing was endless and even if there was a peace treaty he’d stab them in the back. It’s not strange that we are bound together with them through hatred. It’s no wonder that they’d consider a treaty of peace from the 『Demon-kin』 as some kind of prank.”

Grayald sighed as if speaking to himself.

“I understand that neither the 『Human Race』 nor the 『Beastman』 would forgive the atrocities committed by my brother. However unless someone severs the chain of hatred, the sorrow will only increase.”

“Are you suggesting that we are the ones to sever that chain?”

Marione said with a mocking smile.

“Indeed.”

“That’s impossible. Are you not aware that they are killing 『Demon-kin』 ? I’m sure that our brethren also cannot accept this. Are you saying that we should lay low until peace is achieved? When will that be? Will it be when we have perished?”

“No! I will protect the 『Demon-kin』 !”

“Don’t make me laugh. Everything you’ve said so far only endangers the 『Demon-kin』 .”

Hearing Marione’s aspirations made Eveam look like she was at a loss for words.

“Even so... I...”

“The 『Human Race』 will train their heroes and attack us before long. No even before

that the 『Beastman』 are waiting for their chance to attack as well. There has been signs of that. Either way, we're out of time. We can only kill each other until one side perishes. Please withdraw the ceasefire!"

The reason why the 『Demon-kin』 were not attacking the other races was because Eveam had used her authority as Demon King to enforce a ceasefire. The Demon King's orders were absolute. Since olden days, capital punishment awaited those who went against those orders.

"Now, let us remove all the hindrances with all our might before it's too late! Your Majesty!"

Hearing those words Eveam remained silent for a while then she raised her head and looked at Marione. Her expression showed that she had no intention of yielding to him and he frowned.

"I won't withdraw the ceasefire!"

"Your Majesty!"

"Why don't you calm down for a bit, Marione-dono?"

"Shut up you beastman defect!"

Marione glared at Ornoth, who had interrupted him, ready to kill him.

"To begin with what is a 《Taboo》 like you doing here!? You're just ——."

"Shut up!"

"?!"

Eveam suddenly bellowed, the atmosphere around them froze and then she glared at Marione.

"Are you defying the Demon King's orders?!"

"Gr... Hmph!"

He left the room with a snort.

“Is it alright to not to stop him, Your Majesty?”

She faintly smiled at Shublar’s question.

“N-no... My belief will not be shaken.”

“He has a short temper but he’s worrying about the 『Demon-kin』’s future in his own way.”

Aquinas, who had remained silent until now, spoke.

Of course he was talking about Marione.

“I know.”

“His wife and child were killed by the beastman.”

Ornoth quietly shut his eyes. Eveam clenched her fist in frustration while looking at him.

She understood the grudge Marione held because of that incident but still she believed that it was wrong to be dominated by hatred.

“You are... Dismissed for today.”

Looking completely different from before, she left the place with Kiria looking feeble and bitter. The others left one by one and only Aquinas and Ornoth remained behind.

“Don’t take it to heart. I said it before, Marione just has a short temper.”

Ornoth inadvertently smiled at Aquinas’s sudden words.

“No, I’m more worried about Her Majesty.”

“...?”

“What are your thoughts on Her Majesty’s idealistic path?”

“... Naïve. Too Naïve.”

“...”

“However...”

“Mhm?”

“If there truly is a world where there is no pain then I would love to see it.”

“... You’re right.”

“But as long as we’re the only ones striving for it, we’ll only be confronted by nothing more than cruel reality.”

“I suppose.”

“... Someone.”

“Mhm?”

“If there was someone who was unbiased about race. Someone who could act as a mediator and build connections with other races...”

“Is that impossible for Her Majesty?”

“It’s impossible for the Princess... No, for Her Majesty alone. Besides she’s the 『Demon-kin』’s representative.”

“Right. We need someone who is neither affiliated with the 『Human Race』, the 『Beastman』, the 『Demon-kin』 nor the 『Spirit Race』. If it’s someone like that then they could act as mediator.”

“Now that’s idealistic.”

“Despite that are you still going to support Her Majesty?”

“Yes.”

“And I also swore to support you back then.”

“... How loyal of you.”

They gave each other a faint smile and stood up from their seats. Aquinas thought,
(A mediator... That’s really idealistic.)





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